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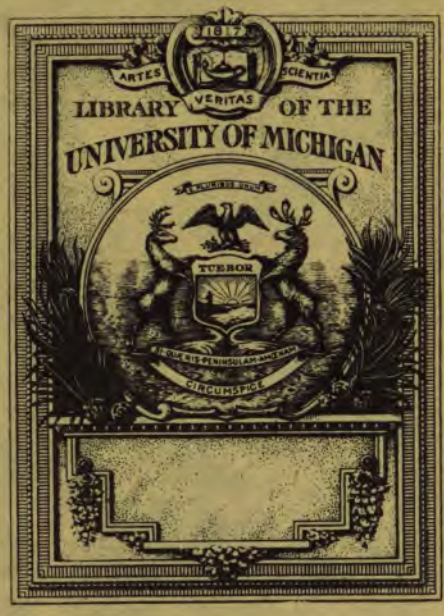
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from her Affectionate Daughter
Selena Childers

SERMONS

BY THE

REV. THOMAS GISBORNE, M. A.

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TO THE RIGHT REVEREND

LEWIS BAGOT, D.D.

LORD BISHOP OF SAINT ASAPH.

MY LORD,

THE honor which you have been pleaſed to confer on a former publication of mine (*a*), by cauſing a very large portion of it to be edited in the Welch language; and the manner in which you were ſo good as to apply to me, at that time perſonally a ſtranger to your Lordſhip, for my aſſent to the plan, and to ſpeak of thoſe parts of the book, the tranſlation of which was not required by your immediate purpoſe; have rendered it my duty to embrace any opportunity which might occur of publicly teſtifying my gratitude.

(*a*) A Familiar Survey of the Chriſtian Religion, &c.

I avail myſelf of the preſent occaſion with cordial pleaſure. Allow me to ſay that, independently of all private conſiderations, the proof which your Lordſhip's conduct afforded of vigilant ſolicitude to adopt any meaſure which, in your opinion, ſhould ſeem likely to be ſubſervient to the eternal intereſts of the inhabitants of the dioceſe conſigned to your ſuperintendence, excited in my mind very lively emotions of ſatisfaction. May the grace of God attend and proſper your pious exertions!

It may be right to add ſome few words reſpecting the Volume now inſcribed to your Lordſhip. Different writers of Sermons, all aiming at the ſame ultimate object, purſue it, according to their reſpective views, judgements, habits of ſtudy, and other circumſtances, in different ways. The vineyard of God will employ and remunerate labourers of various deſcriptions. My preſent efforts, as an humble workman in that vineyard, have been principally directed to two

points:

points: the elucidation of ſome fundamental doctrines of our faith; and the inculcation of a practical truth of the higheſt moment, yet a truth which too often, if we may judge by the language in common uſe among men when ſpeaking either concerning themſelves or others, is fatally undiſcerned or diſregarded, that nothing ſhort of an avowed and unreſerved ſurrender of the *whole* heart to God through Chriſt, evinced, under the bleſſing of divine grace, by a zealous and habitual purſuit of univerſal holineſs, is Religion.

Many perſons appear to imagine that, when once the reſearches of an individual into the Chriſtian Revelation have ſatisfied him as to its ſacred authority, the remainder of his religious courſe lies plain and eaſy before him. They perceive not that he has aſcended but the firſt and the leaſt laborious acclivity of the mountain. Surely it requires but a ſmall degree of inſight into human nature and the Scriptures to diſcover with how much greater

facility the underſtanding is convinced of ſpeculative truth, than the heart is ſubdued to a productive faith and a practical love of holineſs. I ſhall rejoice if any part of the following pages ſhould be rendered inſtrumental in diſſipating the pernicious deluſion which I have mentioned.

I am, with ſincere reſpect,

My Lord,

Your Lordſhip's obliged

and affectionate Servant,

THOMAS GISBORNE.

Yoxall Lodge,
April 20, 1802.

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It

It is even a Vapour, that appeareth for a little Time, and then vaniſheth away. For that ye ought to ſay; "If the Lord will, we "ſhall live and do this or that." But now ye rejoice in your Boaſtings: all ſuch Rejoicing is Evil. Therefore to Him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not; to Him it is Sin. - - - Page 318

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March 1808

SERMON I.

JESUS CHRIST the Corner-Stone.

1 PETER, ii. 6.

Behold! I lay in Sion a chief Corner-Stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on Him ſhall not be confounded.

TO the attentive reader the holy Scriptures continually offer new ſubjects of admiration and gratitude. Among other circumſtances which will excite his wonder and thankfulneſs, he will notice the accommodating condeſcenſion of God to the dulneſs of human underſtanding, in ſetting before men under ſo copious a variety of appropriate and familiar figures the nature and plan of Redemption through Chriſt. The ſower ſowing his ſeed; the good ſhepherd giving his life for the ſheep; the vine nouriſhing its branches; the king making a marriage for his ſon; the houſeholder ſuperintending his vineyard; the fa-

ther receiving the repentant prodigal; the maſter ſettling accounts with his ſervants; the wheat-field overſpread with tares; the net caſt into the ſea, and gathering fiſhes of every kind: theſe are among the images, by which the office of the Son of God, and his dealings with man, are repreſented and rendered clear to our apprehenſions. In the paſſage now before us the apoſtle alludes to our Saviour under the deſcription of a maſſy corner-ſtone placed in the foundation of a building, that it may unite and bind together the principal walls, and may thus enſure the firmneſs and the durability of the ſtructure. Chriſt is diſplayed to us as the chief corner-ſtone, of choſen ſtrength, of ineſtimable value, fixed by the hand of God himſelf, and capable of ſuſtaining for ever and ever the fabric of the univerſal church. Under this image Chriſt was originally pourtrayed by David and Iſaiah. *The Stone which the builders refuſed, the ſame is become the head-ſtone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes* (*a*). *Therefore thus ſaith the Lord God; Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a ſtone, a tried ſtone, a precious corner-ſtone, a ſure foundation; he that believeth* on him *ſhall not make haſte* (*b*); ſhall not be hurried into diſmay, ſhall not be confounded. To theſe words of Iſaiah

(*a*) Pſalm cxviii. 22, 23. (*b*) Iſaiah, xxviii. 16.

St.

St. Peter refers. To them St. Paul alſo refers in his epiſtles to the Romans, and to the Epheſians (*c*). In ſeveral paſſages in the New Teſtament the expreſſions of David are likewiſe recited and applied to Chriſt (*d*). I propoſe, therefore, in the firſt place, to point out ſome of the particulars with reſpect to which we are to regard Jeſus Chriſt as the great corner-ſtone. And I ſhall endeavour afterwards to illuſtrate the animating declaration of St. Peter; that he who believeth on Chriſt ſhall not be confounded: and the tremendous warning which it involves, that they who refuſe to believe on Chriſt ſhall be confounded for ever.

I. 1. Jeſus Chriſt is the corner-ſtone of religious doctrine. He is the ſole foundation, the author and finiſher (*e*) of our faith. He came from the Father: he is one with the Father: and he knoweth the will of the Father. He was in the beginning with God, and was God: and he knew the incomprehenſible nature and the unchangeable attributes of the Godhead. He knew the perfect holineſs neceſſary to obtain acceptance from a God of holineſs. He knew the inherent heinouſneſs of ſin; the extreme guilt of every deviation

(*c*) Romans, ix. 33. x. 11. Epheſians, ii. 20. (*d*) Matt. xxi. 42. Acts, iv. 11. (*e*) 1 Cor. iii. 10, 11. Heb. xii. 2.

from the divine law, of every inſtance of rebellion againſt God. He knew how great muſt be the ſacrifice, for he offered himſelf to be made that ſacrifice, by which the pardon of ſin, and the reſtoration of the divine favour, ſhould be procured. He knew by what price, for that price he undertook to pay, the continual grace of the Holy Spirit, by which alone the ſinner could be enabled to repent, to believe, to become holy, and to perſevere in holineſs, muſt be purchaſed. He was the Son of the God of truth: he was Truth himſelf; and he came into the world to bear witneſs to the truth. By his perſonal miniſtry, and by the miniſtry of his apoſtles, he revealed to the fallen children of men the things which belonged to their peace. By his Spirit he inſtructed and empowered the ſacred writers of the New Teſtament to ſpread to the moſt diſtant regions, to deliver down to the lateſt generations, the words of eternal life. Well therefore may St. Paul affirm that *all Scripture is profitable for doctrine* (*f*), Well may St. John pronounce; *Whoſoever abideth not in the doctrine of Chriſt, hath not God: he that abideth in the doctrine of Chriſt, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine; receive*

(*f*) 2 Tim. iii. 16.

him

him not into your houſe, neither bid him God ſpeed: for he that biddeth him God ſpeed, is partaker of his evil deeds (*g*). Take then your faith from the mouth of your Saviour, and of his inſpired apoſtles and evangeliſts. Look to your bible. Fix your foot on that rock. Apply to yourſelf the admonitions of St. Paul: *Be ſtedfaſt in the unity of the faith. Be not toſſed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine: but ſpeaking the truth in love, grow up unto Him in all things who is the head, even Chriſt. Be not carried about with divers and ſtrange doctrines: for it is a good thing that the heart be eſtabliſhed with grace. Remember them which have ſpoken unto you the word of God: whoſe faith follow, conſidering the end of their converſation, Jeſus Chriſt, the ſame yeſterday, and to-day, and for ever* (*h*). Recollect the prophetic warning of the ſame apoſtle. *The time will come when they will not endure ſound doctrine* (*i*). That time has long ſince arrived. The prophecy has already been fulfilled, and is at this day fulfilling, with reſpect to multitudes. Numbers at this day, while they profeſs themſelves Chriſtians, erect themſelves in oppoſition to the eſſential doctrines of the Goſpel. Sometimes they exclaim againſt its myſteries: and preſuming

(*g*) 2 John, 9—11. (*h*) Epheſ. iv. 13—15. Heb. xiii. 7, 9. (*i*) 2 Tim. iv. 3.

to meaſure by their unaſſiſted reaſon ſubjects utterly beyond the graſp of human underſtanding, plunge into the moſt extravagant wildneſſes of interpretation, rather than bend to the plain and repeated declarations of God concerning the nature of his own Godhead. More frequently they take offence at the humiliating facts which lie at the root of the doctrine of redemption: that man is radically corrupt; that the law of God is a law of perfect holineſs, and requires perfect obedience; that any breach of that law in any one point, ſubjects the offender to the penalty of eternal death; that holineſs is in no reſpect the product of the human heart, but altogether the fruit of the Spirit of God; and conſequently that whoever ſhall receive remiſſion of puniſhment, ſanctification, and the gift of life eternal, will receive all theſe bleſſings ſolely through the free grace and mercy of God in Chriſt, and will owe no one of them in the ſmalleſt portion or degree to any right or merit of his own. Numbers, inſtead of humbly acknowledging theſe truths, which are as conſiſtent with reaſon as they are decidedly inculcated in the Scriptures, proudly rely on their ſuppoſed perſonal righteouſneſs; dare to claim forgiveneſs and ſalvation as in part at leaſt due to their own excellence and good works;

works; and are ſo far from looking to Chriſt as the ſole ground of hope of deliverance from the wrath to come, and of admiſſion into the kingdom of glory, that they regard his atoning ſacrifice merely, if I may venture to apply the term to ſo aweful a ſubject, as a ſort of make-weight, which may compenſate for ſuch of their tranſgreſſions as their own imaginary righteouſneſs may not have been altogether ſufficient to wipe away. So blind to their own ſtate, ſo ignorant of the fundamental principles of Chriſtianity, are many who frequent Chriſtian worſhip! May God grant that few or none of you, when you examine your own faith, may find yourſelves of this deſcription! *Meditate then*, as the apoſtle exhorts, *upon theſe things. Take heed to thyſelf and to thy doctrine: continue in them. Speak thou the things which become ſound doctrine; that men be ſound in faith. If any man conſent not to wholeſome words, even the words of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and to the doctrine which is according to godlineſs; he is proud, knowing nothing* (*k*).

2. Chriſt, in the ſecond place, is the corner-ſtone of morality. He conferred, in various ways, moſt eminent glory on the moral law of God. He came to give himſelf as a ſacrifice

(*k*) 1 Tim. iv. 15, 16. Tit. ii. 1, 2. 1 Tim. vi. 3, 4.

for offences committed againſt that law: and thus eſtabliſhed in the face of men and of the univerſe, the excellence of that law; and evinced the heinouſneſs of ſin, for which no inferior atonement could ſuffice. In explaining that law, he ſhewed by his ſermon on the mount, as well as by many occaſional expoſitions, its holy and ſpiritual nature. Far from perverting its operations, like the Phariſees and Scribes; far from reſtraining its influence, according to their abſurd and pernicious ſyſtem, to outward and notorious ſins, or exhauſting its efficacy on the punctilious obſervance of trifling duties and unauthoriſed commandments; he ſanctioned and magnified the whole law: he aſſigned to its ſeveral precepts and injunctions the place and preponderance to which they were reſpectively entitled: and he extended the empire of every one of them to the heart. *Think not*, ſaid he, *that I am come to deſtroy the law: I am not come to deſtroy, but to fulfil. For verily I ſay unto you, till heaven and earth paſs, one jot or one tittle ſhall in no wiſe paſs from the law, till all be fulfilled. Wo unto you, Scribes and Phariſees! for ye pay tithe of mint and aniſe and cummin; and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgement, mercy, and faith. Theſe ought ye to have done; and not to leave the other undone. Who-*

ſoever is angry with his brother without a cauſe is in danger of the judgement. Whoſoever looketh on a woman to luſt after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart. Out of the heart proceed the things which defile a man. Bleſſed are the pure in heart: for they ſhall ſee God (*l*). During the whole period of his miniſtry he afforded a conſtant example of perfect obedience to the moral law. Every duty which it became him as man to fulfil towards men, he diſcharged no leſs punctually than thoſe obligations of which the immediate object was God. He was *holy, undefiled, ſeparate from ſinners* (*m*). *Made like unto his brethren* (*n*) in every point except one; in one point he differed totally and immeaſurably from them all: for he was *without ſin* (*o*). By his example, and for the expreſs purpoſe of glorifying his name, every moral duty is inculcated and enforced by the apoſtles: and thus alſo the moral law is continually receiving additional glory through him. If humility is to be impreſſed, *Let this mind*, ſaith St. Paul, *be in you which was in Chriſt Jeſus; who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himſelf of no reputation, and took upon him the form of*

(*l*) Matt. v. 17, 18. xxiii. 23. v. 22, 28. xv. 18. v. 8.
(*m*) Heb. vii. 26. (*n*) Heb. ii. 17. (*o*) Heb. iv. 15.

a ſer-

a ſervant, and was made in the likeneſs of men. And being found in faſhion as a man, he humbled himſelf and became obedient unto death, even the death of the croſs (*p*). When the ſame apoſtle recommends meekneſs and gentleneſs; what is his argument? *I beſeech you by the meekneſs and gentleneſs of Chriſt* (*q*). When he exhorts to unity and concord, and mutually edifying aſſiſtance? *Let every one of us pleaſe his neighbour for his good to edification: for even Chriſt pleaſed not himſelf:* fought not his own eaſe and ſatisfaction, but the benefit of others. *The God of patience and conſolation grant you to be like minded one towards another, according to Chriſt Jeſus; that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God* (*r*). When he admoniſhes Chriſtians to brotherly love; to what pattern does he refer us? *Walk in love, as Chriſt alſo hath loved us; and hath given himſelf for us an offering and a ſacrifice unto God* (*s*). By what example does he enforce the duty of forgiveneſs? *Even as Chriſt forgave you, ſo alſo do ye* (*t*). How does he encourage charity to the poor? *So labouring ye ought to ſupport the weak; and to remember the words of the Lord Jeſus, how he ſaid, It is more bleſſed to*

(*p*) Philipp. ii. 5—8. (*q*) 2 Cor. x. 1. (*r*) Rom. xv. 1—6.
(*s*) Eph. v. 2. (*t*) Col. iii. 13.

give than to receive (*u*). When St. Peter teaches men to be patient under injuries; what model does he propoſe to them? *If, when ye do well and ſuffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For Chriſt alſo ſuffered for us, leaving us an example that we ſhould follow his ſteps: who did no ſin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he ſuffered, he threatened not* (*w*). When the ſame apoſtle inculcates univerſal holineſs; to what ſtandard does he direct the thoughts of his followers? *As he*, Jeſus Chriſt, *which hath called you is holy; ſo be ye holy in all manner of converſation* (*x*). Is not the ſame motive urged by St. John? *He that ſaith, he abideth in Him*, namely, in Chriſt, *ought himſelf alſo to walk even as He walked* (*y*). And do not the ſacred writers hold up the name of Chriſt as the great and conſtant incitement to all holineſs? *Whatſoever ye do in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jeſus. Let God in all things be glorified through Jeſus Chriſt. Let every one that nameth the name of Chriſt depart from iniquity* (*z*).

If Chriſt has thus glorified, if he has thus eſtabliſhed, in its wideſt extent, the moral law of God, by his life, by

(*u*) Acts, xx. 35. (*w*) 1 Pet. ii. 20—23. (*x*) 1 Pet. i. 15. (*y*) 1 John, ii. 6. (*z*) Col. iii. 17. 1 Pet. iv. 11. 2 Tim. ii. 19.

his

his death, by his perſonal inſtructions, and by the Holy Ghoſt ſpeaking by the mouth of his apoſtles: how fatally do thoſe unhappy men deceive themſelves who diſcourſe of a mitigated law; who imagine that they are in any degree ſet at liberty through Chriſt from any one obligation to univerſal holineſs, from any one branch or particle of moral duty. *Shew me thy faith by thy works* (*a*), if thou hopeſt to enter into heaven. If the fruits of faith do not habitually appear in thy life; thine is not a faith which will juſtify thee through Chriſt. If thy deeds are the deeds of darkneſs; thou belongeſt to the kingdom of darkneſs. If thou indulgeſt thyſelf in any known ſin; thou art in bondage to the author of ſin. Unleſs with a broken and contrite heart thou fleeſt unto Jeſus, and haſt thy fruits through his Spirit unto holineſs; thy end ſhall not be everlaſting life.

3. Jeſus Chriſt, in the third place, is the corner-ſtone of ſalvation. *Other foundation can no man lay* (*b*). *There is no other name under heaven, given among men, whereby they muſt be ſaved* (*c*). Through him we are juſtified; through him we are ſanctified; through him we receive the inheritance of eternal life. In conſequence of the ſinfulneſs and diſobe-

(*a*) James, ii. 18. (*b*) 1 Cor. iii. 11. (*c*) Acts, iv. 12.

dience

dience of men, a covenant of works neceſſarily terminates in death. *All have ſinned, and come ſhort of the glory of God: and by the deeds of the law ſhall no fleſh be juſtified in his ſight* (*d*). *The wages of ſin*, of every ſin, *is death* (*e*). Every man reads his own ruin in that tremendous denunciation; *Curſed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them* (*f*): and looks forward with gloomy forebodings to the final ſentence on record againſt all who ſhall remain under the curſe of the law: *Depart, ye curſed, into everlaſting fire* (*g*).

Chriſt is the mediator of a new and a better covenant eſtabliſhed in his own blood. He *redeemed us from the curſe of the law, being made a curſe for us*; that he might reconcile us to God by the croſs (*h*). He laid down his life of himſelf: no man took it from him; but he laid down his life of himſelf (*i*); that all that believe in him, and prove their faith by holy obedience, ſhould be clothed with his righteouſneſs, and receive, through the merits of his atonement, pardon and eternal happineſs. He roſe from the dead, and ſhewed himſelf again upon earth, *for our juſtification* (*k*): as a deciſive

(*d*) Rom. iii. 20—23. (*e*) Rom. vi. 23. James, ii. 10, 11. (*f*) Gal. iii. 10. (*g*) Matt. xxv. 41. (*h*) Gal. iii. 13, (*i*) John, xv. 18. (*k*) Rom. iv. 25.

proof

proof that the price which he had paid for human redemption was accepted; that the divine juſtice was appeaſed by the ſufferings which, as the ſurety of man, he had ſuſtained; that mercy and reconciliation through him were freely offered to all mankind; that he ever liveth to make interceſſion for us; that he has the keys of death and the grave, that to him all judgement is committed, that he has all power in earth and heaven. Through him we have acceſs to the Father. He is the way, and the truth, and the life: and no man cometh unto the Father but by Him (*l*). Through Him alone we obtain the regenerating ſanctification of the Holy Ghoſt. If we are *born again of water and of the Spirit;* emblematically of water, ſubſtantially of the Spirit; and are thus rendered capable of *entering into the kingdom of God* (*m*); that Spirit is the Spirit Chriſt, and is ſent forth by Chriſt from the Father (*n*). If *we are ſaved by the waſhing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghoſt;* that influence of the Holy Ghoſt *is ſhed on us abundantly through Jeſus Chriſt our Saviour* (*o*). If we *come forth* from our graves *to the reſurrection of life*; it is becauſe Chriſt

(*l*) Ephes. ii. 18. John, xiv. 6.
(*m*) John, iii. 5.
(*n*) Rom. viii. 9. John, xv. 26.
(*o*) Tit. iii. 5, 6.

liveth

liveth that we ſhall live alſo (*p*). If we are admitted into the manſions of his Father; it is becauſe He is gone before to prepare a place for us (*q*). Well therefore ſpake the voice of prophecy, when God announced beforehand the future coming of his Son in the fleſh; *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion: ſhout, O daughter of Jeruſalem! Behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is juſt, and having ſalvation. I will place ſalvation in Zion for Iſrael. I will alſo give thee for a light unto the Gentiles; that thou mayeſt be my ſalvation unto the ends of the earth* (*r*). Well do the ſacred writers of the New Teſtament celebrate the Lord Jeſus under the name of a *Horn of ſalvation, the Captain of our ſalvation* (*s*). Well might that glorious and countleſs multitude ſeen by St. John before the throne of God and of Chriſt; *a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations and kindreds, and peoples and tongues, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;* well might they cry with a loud voice, while the ſurrounding hoſts of angels fell down on their faces and worſhipped, *Salvation to our God and unto the Lamb* (*t*). My brethren, *How ſhall we eſcape, if we neglect ſo great ſalvation* (*u*)?

(*p*) John, v 29. xiv. 19. (*q*) John, xiv. 2. (*r*) Zech. ix. 9. Iſaiah, xlvi. 13. xlix. 6. (*s*) Luke, i. 69. Heb. ii. 10. (*t*) Rev. vii. 9—12. (*u*) Heb. ii. 3.

II. 1. Thus then we are to look to Jeſus Chriſt as the corner-ſtone of our faith, of our practice, of our juſtification, of our ſanctification, of our hopes of pardon and eternal life. He who builds on that corner-ſtone, builds on a ſure rock: he who believes on Chriſt ſhall not be confounded.

Chriſt, ſaith the apoſtle, *is able to ſave to the uttermoſt them that come unto God by him* (*w*). He is head over all things to his church, which he purchaſed with his own blood. He has declared that the gates of hell ſhall not prevail againſt it. *Fear not, little flock*, ſaid he to his diſciples: *for it is your Father's good pleaſure to give you the kingdom* (*x*). Into that univerſal church he invites all mankind. *Go into all the world; and preach the goſpel to every creature. Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden; and I will give you reſt. Take my yoke upon you, and ye ſhall find reſt to your ſouls. Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wiſe caſt out* (*y*). *For the Scripture ſaith*, as St. Paul ſubjoins, *whoſoever believeth on Him ſhall not be aſhamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the ſame Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.*

(*w*) Heb. vii. 25. (*x*) Luke, xii. 32. (*y*) Mark, xvi. 15. Matt. xi. 28, 29. John, vi. 37.

For

For whoſoever ſhall call upon the name of the Lord ſhall be ſaved (*z*). Believe then in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and thou ſhalt be ſaved (*a*). Haſt thou a true and lively faith in Chriſt: not a barren and dead faith, influencing only thy underſtanding; but a genuine and living faith, governing thy heart, and proving its own reality by ſtedfaſt holineſs of life? Thy faith has already brought thee into the way of ſalvation. Perſevere in the ſame faith unto death, and thou ſhalt obtain ſalvation. For *he that endureth unto the end, the ſame ſhall be ſaved* (*b*). *My ſheep*, ſaith the Lord Jeſus, *hear my voice; and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life; and they ſhall never periſh, neither ſhall any pluck them out of my hand* (*c*). If, as Noah fled to the ark, thou haſt fled for refuge from deſtruction to thy Saviour; and if thou proveſt, by hearing his voice and following him, that thou continueſt in his ſheep-fold: theſe promiſes are made unto thee. Chriſt, the good ſhepherd, will not permit the powers of darkneſs to pluck thee from thence by violence: and he will afford thee grace ſufficient, if thou wilt ſeek and employ it aright, to preſerve thee from abandoning his fold of thyſelf. He

(*z*) Rom. x. 11—13. (*a*) Acts, xvi. 31.
(*b*) Matt. x. 22. (*c*) John, x. 27, 28.

will not ſuffer thee to be tempted above that which thou art able to ſuſtain; but with the temptation will alſo make a way to eſcape, that thou mayeſt be able to bear it. He will ſo overrule the events of thy life, that all things ſhall work together to thee for good in the end, becauſe thou loveſt God and thy Redeemer. When he chaſtens thee, he will think upon mercy. When diſtreſs and anguiſh are ready to overpower thee; he will fill thy heart with the peace of God, which paſſeth all underſtanding. He will ſtrengthen thee upon the bed of languiſhing; he will make all thy bed in thy ſickneſs. When thou walkeſt through the valley of the ſhadow of death, thou ſhalt fear no evil; for he ſhall be with thee, his rod and his ſtaff ſhall comfort thee. When thou ſtandeſt before his throne of judgement, he will acknowledge thee for his ſervant. He will interpoſe his atonement between thee and condemnation. He will cover thy unworthineſs with his merits; he will array thee in his righteouſneſs. He will change thy vile body, that it may be faſhioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to ſubdue all things unto himſelf. He will ſay unto thee, *Come, thou bleſſed of my Father; inherit the kingdom prepared for thee from the foundation of*

the

the world (*d*). He will cauſe thee to reign with him for ever and ever.

My brethren, if theſe are bleſſings worthy of your purſuit; remember through whom alone they are to be obtained. Remember Jeſus Chriſt, the Author and Finiſher of your faith; Jeſus Chriſt your Legiſlator and your King; Jeſus Chriſt your propitiatory ſacrifice; Jeſus Chriſt the Lord of life, the Giver of ſalvation. Take your part with him. Conſecrate yourſelves to his ſervice. Stand forth as his ſoldiers in the face of an unrighteous world. If you are not with Chriſt, you are againſt him. There is no middle path. If you are not his friends; you are the friends of the world, the fleſh and the devil. If religion is any thing, it is every thing. If you make religion a ſecondary concern; you are not religious. If it be not your prevailing deſire and ſtudy day by day to walk in the faith of Chriſt, and to manifeſt your love and fear of God through his Son by humble, watchful, reſolute, and perſevering holineſs; you are not religious. Look well then to yourſelves; for eternity is at ſtake.

2. *If the righteous ſcarcely be ſaved*; if even thoſe perſons, whoſe hearts the Spirit of ſanctification has turned unto holineſs, mourn unto

(*d*) Matt. xxv. 34.

the cloſe of life under the burden of corruptions ſtill unſubdued; and experience, until the moment when they graſp in death their unfading crown of victory, the difficulties and the dangers of their Chriſtian warfare: *where ſhall the ungodly and the ſinner appear* (*e*)! What ſhall be the doom of the enemies of Chriſt; of thoſe who refuſe to build on that corner-ſtone which the hand of God has planted for ſalvation! They ſhall be confounded for ever. The ſtone which the builders rejected is become the head-ſtone of the corner. *Whoſoever ſhall fall on this ſtone, ſhall be broken: but on whomſoever it ſhall fall, it ſhall grind him to powder* (*f*).

Conſider, whoever thou art, who art *ungodly and a ſinner!* Conſider whether this prophetic warning of the deſtruction which hangs over thine head, and over the heads of all who reſemble thee, has not already received in many memorable inſtances completion ſo deciſive in the preſent world, as to give thee full aſſurance that the judgements beyond the tomb, which are revealed as awaiting the impenitent, ſhall be accompliſhed to the uttermoſt. Suppoſe, in the latter days of the Evangeliſt St. John, one of his youthful diſciples at Epheſus, after hearing a recital of

(*e*) 1 Pet. iv. 18. (*f*) Pſ. cxviii. 22. Matt. xxi. 42. 44.

the

the life and ſufferings of Chriſt, to have enquired of the aged apoſtle concerning the events which had befallen the moſt diſtinguiſhed adverſaries of his Lord. "Did Herod, who ſought to murder the new-born Saviour at Bethlehem, deſcend to the grave in peace?" "He died, ſmitten by the hand of God, in agony and deſperation; baffled in his attempt to cut ſhort his miſerable exiſtence; worn away by the lingering horrors of a diſeaſe unexampled in loathſomeneſs and anguiſh (*g*)." "What vengeance overtook the traitor Judas?" "He periſhed by his own hand!" "What was the end of that other wretch of the name of Herod, by whom Chriſt, a ſhort time before his crucifixion, was derided?" "He was ſtripped by the Roman emperor of his property and of his kingdom, and was driven into perpetual exile (*h*)." "What befel the iniquitous judge, Pontius Pilate?" "Recalled in diſgrace from his government, and condemned to baniſhment, he took away his own life." "The city of Jeruſalem, which nailed its king to the croſs; does it ſurvive?" "Not one ſtone of it is left upon another!" "Where is now the Jewiſh nation?" Cut off by unequalled calamities;

(*g*) Joſephi Opera, edit. Hudſ. vol. ii. p. 768. 770, &c.
(*h*) *Ibid.* p. 820. 1067.

or ſcattered in bondage and infamy over the face of the earth!" Within the ſpan of St. John's life all theſe examples of divine juſtice and truth were diſplayed. What if we continue the enquiry lower? What befel the Roman empire; which firſt ſhed the blood of the Maſter, and then perſecuted his followers? It bowed to the ſtandard of the croſs; it diſhonoured by ſin the Chriſtian profeſſion; and was ſwept away by the deluge of barbarians which the Dragon, "the Old Serpent," is repreſented in the book of revelations as having poured forth for the deſtruction of the Chriſtian church. But were thoſe pagan invaders permitted a long triumph over Chriſtianity? *The earth opened her mouth, and ſwallowed up the flood* (*i*). Their names are nearly vaniſhed from remembrance; nation after nation ſpeedily worſhipped within the pale of the church which it came to deſtroy; and among their deſcendents, deeply as the majority of them has been ſunk for many ages in the bitter dregs of a corrupted religion, are to be found *peoples and languages* eminent for evangelical purity of faith. What is the preſent ſtate of thoſe pre-eminent antagoniſts of Jeſus, the votaries of the Papacy and of Mahomet? To the ſervants of Jeſus they are ſtill

(*i*) Rev. xii. 15, 16.

formidable

formidable foes. They have not yet fulfilled the appointed period, to the concluſion of which, conformably to the dictates of Prophecy, they ſhall have power to afflict the ſaints of the Moſt High. But *the ſtone, which*, in the viſions of Daniel, *was cut out of the mountain without hands, ſhall* aſſuredly *become a great mountain, and ſhall fill the whole earth* (*j*). However tremendous may be the temporary triumphs in reſerve for papal Rome; even now we behold her, after the lapſe of centuries, ſtaggering under that concuſſion which was a prelude to her irrecoverable fall. Even already we behold in the waning creſcent of Mahomet the tokens of its perpetual extinction. Even already we begin to exclaim, in the rapturous anticipations of aſſured and exulting hope; "Great and marvellous are thy "works, Lord God almighty! Juſt and "true are thy ways, thou King of ſaints. We "praiſe thee, we bleſs thee, we glorify thee; "we acknowledge thee to be the Lord. "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hoſts! "The whole earth is filled with thy glory! "King of kings, and Lord of lords! "Thou haſt taken unto thee thy great "power, and haſt reigned. The kingdoms "of this world are become the kingdoms of

(*j*) Daniel, ii. 34, 35. 45.

" our Lord and of his Chriſt; and He ſhall " reign for ever and ever (*k*)."

In the face of theſe admonitory demonſtrations of the truth of the divine threatenings againſt tranſgreſſors, preſumeſt thou to think, O ungodly ſinner! that thou ſhalt eſcape the judgement of God? Knoweſt thou not that after thy hardneſs and impenitent heart, thou art treaſuring up to thyſelf wrath againſt the day of wrath? Flames and vengeance, tribulation and anguiſh, ſhall be upon every ſoul of man that doeth evil. The ſtone, at which thou ſtumbleſt, ſhall fall on thee, and grind thee to powder. Mercy has been preſſed upon thee, bleſſings have been beſtowed upon thee, in vain. The counſels of God for thy ſalvation thou haſt rejected. The blood of thy Redeemer thou haſt deſpiſed. The Spirit of grace thou haſt grieved. The chains of ſin are multiplying around thee. The ſhades of death eternal are cloſing over thy head. Yet now, even now, it is not too late. Thy Saviour ſtill waiteth to be gracious. He ſtill invites, ſtill encourages, thee to fly to him for pardon and deliverance and peace. Today, if ever thou wilt hear his voice, harden not thy heart. The preſent call may be thy laſt. Ariſe, and flee for thy life.

(*k*) Rev. xi. 17. xv. 3. xvi. 7. xix. 16. Iſaiah, vi. 3.

SERMON II.

The Chriſtian Method of Juſtification explained and vindicated.

ROMANS, iii. 20—22.

By the deeds of the law there ſhall no fleſh be juſtified in his ſight: for by the law is the knowledge of ſin. But now the righteouſneſs of God without the law is manifeſted, being witneſſed by the law and the prophets; even the righteouſneſs of God which is by faith of Jeſus Chriſt.

TO underſtand the value of a benefit, we muſt eſtimate not only its intrinſic amount, but the amount alſo of evil which it mitigates or removes. If a diſtreſſed man would appreciate the real worth of a donation beſtowed upon him; let him conſider the miſery from which it reſcues his family and himſelf.

himſelf no leſs carefully, than the poſitive comforts which it enables him to procure. If a criminal, reſtored by the clemency of his ſovereign to freedom, would become ſenſible of the extent of the gift; in computing the enjoyments of liberty, let him not forget the ſuperſeded horrors of a dungeon. On the ſame principle ought every man to form his judgement, who is deſirous to contemplate in their full importance the mercies of God in the plan of redemption. Together with the ſtate into which he is raiſed, let him labour to comprehend that from which he is delivered. With the glories of life everlaſting, let him contraſt the blackneſs of eternal death.

It was by this principle that the conduct of the apoſtle Paul was actuated, when he addreſſed his epiſtle to the Romans. His primary object was to convince them that all mankind, Jews and Gentiles, were alike guilty before God; and could look for pardon and for eternal happineſs only through Jeſus Chriſt. St. Paul well knew with what unwillingneſs men acknowledge a doctrine, which ſtands in direct oppoſition to the pride of heart ſo deeply rooted in our fallen nature. He knew the eagerneſs, the obſtinacy, which we are all diſpoſed to manifeſt, in confiding more or leſs upon our own righteouſneſs; the earneſtneſs

with which we ſtrain to ſhut our eyes againſt unwelcome conviction; the pains which we employ to twiſt and explain away the meaning of the Scriptures, in order to eſcape the humiliating neceſſity of confeſſing our own utter unworthineſs and depravity in the ſight of our Lord and Judge. In ſeveral of the early chapters therefore of this epiſtle, and afterwards in the ſeventh and the eighth, he dwells with marked anxiety on this moſt important truth;—that any man who would be tried by his own works, by his own deſervings, muſt inevitably periſh. Until an humble recognition of this truth be extorted from us by a conſciouſneſs of our guilt; we never ſhall be perſuaded to fly with godly fear and truly penitent hearts to the croſs of Chriſt for ſalvation. *They that are whole*, ſaid our Lord to the ſelf-righteous Phariſees, *need not a phyſician; but they that are ſick* (*a*). They who are not aware of their ſpiritual maladies, deſpiſe and reject the Saviour who offers, and who alone is able, to heal them. But they whoſe eyes are opened; they who are penetrated with a true ſenſe of their deplorable condition by nature and by tranſgreſſion, and feel that they are completely unable to deliver themſelves from the juſt anger of God; will

(*a*) Luke, v. 31.

throw

throw themſelves with joy at the feet of their Redeemer, and, with humble and grateful hearts, will accept the bleſſing which he offers to beſtow. They will receive him as their Lord; they will adore him as their Saviour; they, under the guidance of the Spirit of grace, will believe in Him, will love Him, and will keep his commandments. They will *walk in Chriſt Jeſus, not after the fleſh, but after the Spirit: and to them there will be no condemnation* (*b*).

It ſhall be my endeavour, in the preſent diſcourſe, to explain to you, from ſeveral diſtinct conſiderations, the nature, and the tranſcendent mercy, of juſtification through Chriſt.

I. Conſider, in the firſt place, the inherent and perfect and neceſſary holineſs of the divine law.

What is the view which the Scriptures diſplay of the perfections of Him who gave the law? God is eternal: He is all-powerful; He knoweth all things: He is every where preſent: He is the Author and Giver of all good. But is there not yet another attribute of the Godhead; an attribute of primary concern to man? Of the perfections which the Scriptures aſcribe to God, the moſt glorious is perfect ho-

(*b*) Rom. viii. 1.

lineſs. Hear on this ſubject the dictates of Inſpiration. *The Lord our God is holy. Holy and reverend is his Name. There is none holy as the Lord. Who is like unto thee, O Lord, glorious in holineſs! Thou only, O Lord, art holy. God is pure, and every word of God is pure. The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works. God cannot be tempted with evil* (*c*). When Chriſt, on the evening which preceded his crucifixion, opened the fulneſs of his heart before God; he addreſſed him by the name of *Righteous Father, Holy Father* (*d*). When Iſaiah in his viſion ſaw the Seraphim ſtanding before the throne of Jehovah, and covering their faces with their wings from the glory of his preſence; he heard them crying one to another, with voices which ſhook the pillars of the temple, *Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hoſts* (*e*). When St. John beheld the four living creatures, the repreſentatives of an innumerable company of Saints, ſurrounding the throne of the Omnipotent; he heard them pour forth in the ſame language their never-ceaſing praiſes. *They reſt not day and*

(*c*) Lev. xix. 2. Pſ. cxi. 9. 1 Sam. ii. 2. Exod. xv. 11. Rev. xv. 4. Prov. xxx. 5. 1 John, iii. 3. Pſ. cxlv. 17. James, i. 13. (*d*) John, xvii. 11. 25. (*e*) Iſaiah, vi. 3.

night,

night, ſaying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty (*f*).

Since God then is a God of perfect holineſs; the laws which he gives to his creatures muſt neceſſarily be holy. From a holy God, nothing except that which is holy can proceed. Well do the Scriptures proclaim; *The ſtatutes of the Lord are right. Thy law, O Lord, is the truth; and thy judgements are righteous. The law of God is holy: and his commandments are holy and juſt and good* (*g*). You cannot examine with attention the law of God, without perceiving its holineſs. The worſhip which he requires of you, is holy worſhip. It is the worſhip of an humble, devout, and pious heart. God is a Spirit: and you are to worſhip him in ſpirit and in truth. The conduct which he requires you to obſerve one towards another is, in every reſpect, according to holineſs. You are to be in all your dealings true, and faithful, and juſt. You are to be filled with good-will towards all men; to be kind, liberal, tender-hearted, forgiving, long-ſuffering, peaceable, meek, gentle. In the government of yourſelves, you are to be temperate, contented, chaſte, and pure. Not only your actions, but your words alſo, and your moſt ſecret thoughts, are

(*f*) Rev. iv. 8. (*g*) Pſalm xix. 8. cxix. 142. 160. Rom. vii. 12.

to

to be holy. In all things, you are to abſtain even from the appearance of evil. Hence in the New Teſtament Chriſtians are ſaid to be *called with an holy calling*: and are exhorted to be *holy and unblamable: to have their fruit unto holineſs; to perfect holineſs in the fear of God* (*b*). Hence too it is ſolemnly declared, that *without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord* (*i*).

II. The next point for your conſideration is this: Whether you have faithfully kept in every particular this holy law of God? Without heſitation, you confeſs that you have not. You confeſs that you have broken it times without number. You confeſs that in thought, or in word, or in deed, you are breaking it every day. You confeſs that you have experienced the acquiſition of that holineſs, which it requires, to be by your own ſtrength unattainable; that although you ſee and know the path of duty, you are continually deviating into a contrary courſe; that the good which you perceive that you ought to do, the good which you wiſh to do, you do not; that the evil which you diſapprove, the evil which you are deſirous of avoiding, you commit. You confeſs that ſin beſets you at

(*b*) 2 Tim. i. 9. Col. i. 22. Rom. vi. 22. 2 Cor. vii. 1.
(*i*) Heb. xii. 14.

all

all times, on every ſide in a thouſand ſhapes, and is perpetually gaining ſome advantage over you. You confeſs that under the influence of a corrupt nature, and the force of temptation, you cannot hope to obey the law of God in any tolerable degree for the future, if you are left to yourſelf. Every one of us, my brethren, who has any knowledge of himſelf, and is capable of profiting by the leſſons of his own experience, will make this confeſſion with deep humility and ſelf-abaſement. It is a confeſſion which the ſcriptures declare to belong to every individual of the human race. They deſcribe the nature which we have all inherited from our forefather Adam as ſo thoroughly corrupted by his rebellion againſt God, and his ſubmiſſion to the enticements and the dominion of the devil; that of ourſelves we not only are unable to fulfil the law of God, but are alienated from him, at enmity with him, averſe to holineſs, prone to ſin. Moſt truly therefore do they pronounce, that *all have ſinned and come ſhort of the glory of God:* that *every mouth is ſtopped, and all the world is become guilty before God:* and that *by the deeds of the law there ſhall no fleſh be juſtified in his ſight* (*k*).

(*k*) Rom. iii. 19, 20. 23.

Conſider

Conſider now the general nature of a law. A law points out certain duties to be performed; promiſes protection, perhaps reward, to thoſe who fulfil its demands; and denounces wrath and puniſhment againſt all who ſhall in any point be guilty of diſobedience. It is thus that the law of God deals with mankind. It enjoins on men the performance of all thoſe duties, which are neceſſary to conſtitute perfect holineſs; duties, many of which are diſcloſed to every man by the light of conſcience, and all of them are clearly ſtated in the law itſelf. It promiſes life to every perſon, who ſhall fully perform the whole of that religious and moral holineſs, which it exacts from all mankind. *The man*, it ſaith, *that doeth them, ſhall live by them* (*l*). But what if a man falls ſhort in ſome particular? He loſes the benefit of the promiſe; and muſt ſubmit to the conſequences of his tranſgreſſion. *Curſed*, ſaith the ſcripture, *Curſed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them* (*m*). The law of God requires *perfect* obedience. To perfect obedience it promiſes the reward of life. To thoſe who tranſgreſs in any point it denounces the puniſhment of eternal death. *Sin is the*

(*l*) Gal. iii. 12. (*m*) Gal. iii. 10.

tranſgreſſion of the law: and the wages of ſin is death (*n*).

Obſerve then the ſituation in which you, and I, and all men ſtand by nature with reſpect to the law of God. He has placed before us a law of perfect holineſs; and has commanded us to obey it. We have not only fallen ſhort of perfect obedience; but have become in numberleſs reſpects miſerable ſinners, full of iniquity, tranſgreſſing daily in thought, in word, and in deed. We have become thus ſinful, not neceſſarily, but wilfully: not neceſſarily; for St. Paul declares that even the Gentiles, who had not the written word of God in their poſſeſſion, were altogether inexcuſable for their tranſgreſſions, becauſe they liſtened not to the law of God written in their conſciences (*o*). We have become thus ſinful wilfully: having poſſeſſed not only the light of conſcience, but the book of God; having knowingly diſobeyed his law; having yielded with open eyes to the inſtigation of our depraved nature, and the artifices of our ſpiritual foe. We have failed, lamentably failed, as to that perfect obedience, to which *alone* the law promiſed the reward of life. We have continually committed, and are continually repeat-

(*n*) 1 John, iii. 4. Rom. vi. 23. (*o*) Rom. i. 19—21. 32.

ing, offences againſt the law; for every one of which the law denounces the penalty of eternal death.

The law promiſed reward to perfect obedience: but it promiſed not pardon to tranſgreſſion. Man, ever inclined to preſumptuous murmuring againſt God, is ready to exclaim that the law was rigorous and cruel. Rigorous and cruel, becauſe it did not hold forth pardon to thoſe who ſhould wilfully break it! Do human laws hold forth pardon to thoſe who wilfully break them? Is it conſiſtent with the nature of a law to hold forth pardon to tranſgreſſors? Would a law which promiſed pardon to thoſe who ſhould break it be likely to procure obedience? Would a wiſe legiſlator among men make ſuch a law? Could you expect a wiſe and holy God to make ſuch a law? The law of God denounces vengeance againſt *all* who break it: and you and I and all men have broken it. If we entertain any hopes of pardon, we muſt look for it from ſome other quarter. We muſt look for it, if we look for it at all, from the undeſerved mercy of the Legiſlator: but in the law itſelf, it is unreaſonable and impoſſible to expect to find forgiveneſs.

But you complain that a ſingle tranſgreſſion ſhould entail the forfeiture of all the bleſſ-

ings which might otherwiſe have been derived under the law! The fact with which you are diſſatisfied is unqueſtionable: a ſingle tranſgreſſion entails a complete forfeiture. And how ſtands the fact in the caſe of human laws? He who tranſgreſſes againſt a ſingle clauſe of a ſingle act of parliament; is he not puniſhed, and juſtly puniſhed, for diſobeying that clauſe, even though he may have punctually regarded every other clauſe of that particular ſtatute, and every clauſe of every other ſtatute? If death itſelf be the penalty denounced againſt all, who ſhould violate that ſtatute; is he not juſtly puniſhed with death? Do you complain then, becauſe God, in delivering for your obſervance his holy law, has adopted a principle, the equity of which, when adopted by the law of your country, you recogniſe every day? Do you complain, becauſe God has eſtabliſhed the divine law on that foundation, which the univerſal conſent of mankind acknowledges as the only baſis, on which any human law can efficaciouſly be reſted? *Whoſoever ſhall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all* (*p*). Whoſoever offends againſt any one precept of the divine law, offends againſt the whole law, of which that

(*p*) James, ii. 10, 11.

precept

precept is a conſtituent part; and againſt the ſovereignty of the Legiſlator, who has enjoined the uniform obſervance of every part of his law: and deſervedly forfeits all the bleſſings which were annexed only to the faithful obſervance of the whole. He who ſins againſt any one branch of any one ſtatute, ſins againſt the whole legiſlative authority of his country, from which every ſtatute derives its obligatory power. By deſpiſing that authority in any one of its injunctions, he proves himſelf devoid of the diſpoſitions of a good ſubject: he loſes all title to the protection of his country, and falls under the ſeverity of her juſtice. And he who wilfully violates in any one inſtance the law of that Legiſlator, who, when he ſaid, "Do not "commit adultery," ſaid alſo, "Do not kill;" who, when he commanded the obſervance of his law in one point, equally commanded the obſervance of it in all: ſins againſt the ſupreme Majeſty of Heaven; ſhews himſelf deſtitute of the temper of a true Chriſtian; juſtly forfeits the favour, and incurs the vengeance of his God.

But you reply that, in ſome caſes, if the unhappy man who, by offending againſt one human law, has rendered himſelf obnoxious to puniſhment, ſhall have been aſſiduous in

his obſervance of the reſt of the laws of the land, he is diſcharged from puniſhment. Diſcharged from puniſhment! How is he diſcharged from it? He receives pardon by an act of grace. Does he preſume to claim pardon as a debt? Does he demand it as his right, becauſe, though he has broken one ſtatute, he has obeyed many? He ſues for it as an emanation of free mercy; and as an emanation of free mercy his ſovereign beſtows it. Now contemplate the divine adminiſtration; and behold the reſiſtleſs force with which your argument turns againſt yourſelf. God is willing to pardon not in few and extraordinary inſtances, but in every inſtance. He does not wait to be entreated; but ſpontaneouſly offers to every offender forgiveneſs and life eternal. When he offers unmerited bleſſings; ſhall he not offer them in his own method, on his own terms? If you ſeek for pardon; ſeek it not in the law, from which it is impoſſible that you ſhould obtain it. Seek it from the free mercy of God: and ſeek it in that channel, through which alone he has decreed that his mercy ſhall be diſpenſed.

III. But previouſly conſider farther, what ſtrong reaſons there might naturally have been for

for apprehenſion, that the puniſhment which our ſins deſerved would be inflicted in its largeſt extent. Recollect the holineſs of God. Recollect that a holy God muſt abhor ſin and ſinners. *Evil*, ſaith the ſcripture, *ſhall not dwell with God. He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. He hateth all the workers of iniquity. The way of the wicked, the thoughts of the wicked, the ſacrifice and prayer of the wicked, are an abomination unto the Lord* (*q*). What then could the wicked have naturally expected but death and miſery? Remember too the juſtice of God. *To me*, ſaith the Lord, *belongeth vengeance and recompence. I will render vengeance to mine enemies* (*r*). By ſin all mankind were become the enemies of God; and had no claim to eſcape the extremity of his juſtice. Remember likewiſe the ſovereignty of God over all his creatures. Was it to be expected that the Sovereign of the Univerſe would permit ſin, which is rebellion againſt himſelf, to paſs unpuniſhed? Would he permit his righteous laws to be broken, without pouring forth his indignation on the tranſgreſſors? Would he paſs over the crimes of the guilty race of man, and thus hold forth an en-

(*q*) Pſ. v. 4, 5. Habb. i. 13. Prov. xv. 8, 9. 26. xxviii. 9.
(*r*) Deut. xxxii. 35. 41. Heb. x. 30.

couragement to preſumptuous guilt in all the other worlds which he has made? Might it not rather have been apprehended, that both for the purpoſe of puniſhing human ſin in proportion to its demerits, and of exhibiting an aweful warning to the whole creation, He would have exacted the full penalty which we had incurred? Theſe are the dreadful forebodings, with which our breaſt might naturally have been filled. And if we had endeavoured to conſole ourſelves with the reflection that God delighteth in mercy, and had ventured on that ground to hope for forgiveneſs; how reaſonably might we have feared, that no method was to be deviſed, in which the Judge of the Univerſe could exerciſe mercy towards man conſiſtently with his holineſs and his juſtice! After all our inquiries, our pleadings, and our hopes, there ſtill lay open before us the gulf of eternal death.

IV. Such was by nature the miſerable ſtate of man. So truly *did the law work wrath.* So truly was *the commandment, which was ordained to be unto life, found to be unto death.* So plainly *by the law was the knowledge of ſin* rendered manifeſt; the knowledge of its heinous guilt, of its univerſal and

deadly influence. So effectually *did ſin, taking occaſion by the commandment, deceive us, and ſlay us.* So fatally *was the law which is holy, and the commandment which is holy and juſt and good, made* by our corruption and tranſgreſſions *death* unto every man (*s*). Thus condemned, thus helpleſs, thus deſtitute of all claim to mercy, thus ignorant whether to human guilt mercy could be extended conſiſtently with the other attributes of God, was the whole race of Adam. But God is infinite in mercy, goodneſs, and wiſdom. He ſaw what man could not diſcern. He perceived the means of reconciling the offer of forgiveneſs to fallen man, with the demands of his own righteous and violated law. *O wretched man that I am!* cried St. Paul; *who ſhall deliver me from the body of this death* (*t*)*?* A ſaviour was at hand. There was one in heaven able to make an atonement: able to make a full, perfect, and ſufficient ſacrifice, oblation, and ſatisfaction for the ſins of the whole world; and ſuch a ſatisfaction as it would be conſiſtent with the righteouſneſs and the juſtice of God to accept. But was this ſaviour willing as well as able to make the atonement? He was willing. He was aware

(*s*) Rom. iii. 20. iv. 15. vii. 10—13. (*t*) Rom. vii. 24.

what

what muſt be the price of man's ſalvation; and that price he freely offered, and took upon himſelf to pay. And who was this ſaviour? What being was it that undertook this moſt aſtoniſhing office of mercy? It was the eternal Son of the eternal God. It was one of the perſons of the incomprehenſible godhead. It was Jeſus Chriſt, who was one with the Father. It was Jeſus Chriſt, who in the beginning had made the world, and now engaged to redeem it. He became ſurety for man. The humiliation, the ſufferings, which he ſaw that as man's ſurety he muſt undergo, diſmayed him not. He knew that the iniquity of the human race was to be laid upon him; that with his ſtripes mankind were to be healed. He knew that he muſt himſelf become the ſacrifice in the place of man. He knew that he muſt leave the glory, in which he had reigned with the Father from eternity; that he muſt come down to dwell on earth; that he muſt himſelf become man, and ſuſtain all the infirmities and evils of human nature, ſin only excepted, which could not approach to him. He knew that he muſt be a man of ſorrows and acquainted with grief; that he ſhould be deſpiſed and rejected by the world which he came to ſave; that of the followers whom he

ſhould

ſhould particularly ſelect to be his companions and friends, he ſhould be betrayed by one, denied by another, forſaken by all. He knew that he ſhould be delivered up to his bittereſt enemies; that he ſhould be expoſed as a mark to the ſhafts of ſcorn, inſult, and cruelty; and that he muſt make atonement by his blood; that he muſt ſuffer a painful and ignominious death, crucified between two malefactors; himſelf condemned as a malefactor, though he was the Lord of Glory. All this he foreſaw to be neceſſary, if he would purchaſe redemption for mankind. All this he foreſaw, but it ſhook not the purpoſe of his love. Though he was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God; he made himſelf of no reputation, and took upon himſelf the form of a ſervant, and was made in the likeneſs of men: and being found in faſhion as a man, he humbled himſelf, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the croſs (*u*). By this his obedience unto death, the great atonement was made. The gate of heaven was thrown open to man. Pardon through the blood of Chriſt, ſanctification through the Holy Ghoſt, and everlaſting happineſs in the world to come, were offered,

(*u*) Philipp. ii. 6—8.

as

as purchaſed by the ſacrifice of Chriſt, to all who ſhould fly for ſalvation to him.

How then may we acquire an intereſt in theſe bleſſings? By faith: by faith only.

Faith is ordained of God to be the inſtrument, the only inſtrument, by which we may receive and apply to ourſelves the mercy of God, the atonement of our Redeemer. *Believe in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and thou ſhalt be ſaved. A man is juſtified by faith. The law worketh wrath: therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace. Therefore being juſtified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt; by whom alſo we have acceſs by faith into this grace wherein we ſtand. The righteouſneſs of God* (the method of juſtification which God hath ordained) *without the works of the law is manifeſted, being witneſſed by the law and the prophets; even the righteouſneſs of God which is by faith of Jeſus Chriſt, unto all, and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference; for all have ſinned and come ſhort of the glory of God; being juſtified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jeſus Chriſt, whom God hath ſet forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood* (*w*). Juſtification by faith alone,

(*w*) Acts, xvi. 31. Rom. iii. 28. Gal. ii. 16. Rom. iv. 15, 16. v. 1, 2. iii. 21—25.

through

through the merits of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, is the grand doctrine of both teſtaments. Under their authority, it was the grand doctrine of the reformation; it is the grand doctrine of the church of England. It was *witneſſed by the law.* It is the juſtification to which the intimations of mercy that gleamed amidſt the aweful curſes of the law alluded; the juſtification which the law with all its ſhadowy rites and emblematical ſacrifices unremittingly prefigured. It is the juſtification *witneſſed by the prophets.* To that Redeemer by whoſe blood it was to be accompliſhed, *give all the prophets witneſs; that through his name, whoſoever believeth on him ſhall receive remiſſion of ſins* (x). It is the juſtification to which, from the goſpel of St. Matthew to the book of Revelations, all the penmen of the new covenant bear witneſs. It is the juſtification by which God is glorified; the juſtification by which man is to be ſaved.

The moſt ſalutary inſtruction may be perverted; the moſt holy doctrine may be vilified. *What ſhall we ſay, therefore,* if Ignorance ſhould accoſt us in the language which ſhe once addreſſed to St. Paul: *Do you then make void the law through faith? Shall we continue in ſin that grace may abound?* In what words ſhall we reply but in thoſe of the apoſtle? *God for-*

(x) Acts, x. 43.

bid!

bid! Yea, we eſtabliſh the law. God forbid! How ſhall we that are dead to ſin, live any longer therein? They which do the works of the fleſh ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God. Continue in faith and holineſs. Without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord. This is a faithful ſaying, and theſe things I will that thou affirm conſtantly; that they which have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works (*y*). Is additional refutation neceſſary? Let it be given in the words of St. James. *Know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead. By works faith is made perfect. By works a man is juſtified, and not by faith only* (*z*). But here new difficulties ſeem to ariſe. "If St. Paul ac-" knowledges that holineſs muſt be con-" ſtantly added to faith; if St. James affirms" that a man is juſtified, not by faith only," but by works; where is the unity of Chriſ-" tian doctrine? Is the apoſtle of the Gen-" tiles inconſiſtent with himſelf? Do the two" apoſtles contradict each other? Will you plead" that they ſpeak of a firſt and of a ſubſequent" juſtification? Or do you contend that they" refer, the one to juſtification in the ſight" of God, the other only to juſtification in" the ſight of men?" St. Paul is in no degree inconſiſtent with himſelf. The two

(*y*) Rom. iii. 31. vi. 1, 2. Gal. v. 19—21. 1 Tim. ii. 15. Tit. iii. 8. Heb. xii. 14. (*z*) James, ii. 20. 22. 24.

apoſtles

apoſtles accord in perfect harmony of ſentiment: they ſpeak of one and the ſame juſtification; and of juſtification in the ſight of God. The juſtifying faith of St. Paul is *faith that worketh by love* (*a*). The juſtifying, or *perfect*, faith of St. James, is faith which bringeth forth *good works*. The ſame faith is deſcribed by the two apoſtles, and in terms of the ſame import. A dead, barren, and ſpeculative faith is equally condemned by both. According to the doctrine, the uniform doctrine of both, a living faith is a faith that juſtifies; and no faith is a living faith, which does not evince itſelf to be ſuch by the fruits which a living faith cannot but produce, *holineſs and good works*. "Yet when St. James "pronounces that a man is juſtified not by faith "only, but by works; is not this," it will finally be objected, "to pronounce that good works "pay a part of the price of our juſtification?" Impoſſible! "How is the impoſſibility mani-"feſted?" By the two following conſiderations. Firſt: Becauſe ſuch an interpretation of the words of the apoſtle, an interpretation in no degree required by the ordinary uſe of language, is utterly inconſiſtent with that righteouſneſs of God, that method of juſtification

(*a*) Gal. v. 6.

by

by faith alone, which is witneſſed by the law and by the prophets; and is completely unfolded in the New Teſtament. And, ſecondly; becauſe it is equally inconſiſtent with the nature of good works. The beſt of human works are imperfect in the ſight of God. They cannot ſtand the inquiſition of his juſtice. They are rendered complete and acceptable before him, only through the atonement of his Son. Admit any human work to have been perfect. It might have ſtood by its perfection. Perfect however it ought to be; and more than perfect it could not be. It could boaſt no ſuperfluous merit. It could advance no overplus of worth which might be applied to make atonement for evil deeds. He who had wrought that work would ſtill have been, as to that very work, *an unprofitable ſervant*; *he would have done no more than it was his duty to do.* Good works, perſevering good works, ſtedfaſt and habitual holineſs of heart and of conduct, are indiſpenſable to ſalvation. By requiring them as indiſpenſable, faith *eſtabliſhes the law*, grace proſcribes and anathematiſes continuance in ſin. But they cannot buy ſalvation: they can pay no part of its price: *they muſt let that alone for ever.* Indiſpenſable as they are, they are valuable,

luable, but as evidences, the ſole evidences, of that faith, which juſtifies through the grace that is in Chriſt Jeſus.

My Chriſtian brethren, I have now endeavoured to ſet before you, conformably to the ſimplicity and the genuine doctrine of the ſcriptures, this moſt important, this frequently miſunderſtood and miſrepreſented ſubject, the method of juſtification through the Lord Jeſus Chriſt. Let me conclude, with briefly recapitulating the ſubſtance of this divine plan, in the way of general application.

If you are ſeeking pardon and eternal life, ſeek them not by ſtanding on the deeds of the law: ſeek them not by claiming them as in the ſlighteſt degree or portion due to any works of your own. *The law worketh wrath. By the deeds of the law ſhall no fleſh be juſtified in the ſight of God. Enter not into judgement with thy ſervant, O Lord: for in thy ſight ſhall no man living be juſtified.* The law of a God of perfect holineſs is itſelf a law of perfect holineſs, and requires perfect obedience. If you fail in any one point, it denounces the penalty of eternal death. *Curſed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.* You are conſcious that, in common with the reſt of mankind, you have failed,

you have tranſgreſſed in numberleſs inſtances. What day has paſſed without your having done, either in thought, or in word, or in deed, that which you ought not to have done; and without your having left undone that which you ought to have done? Were the very beſt of you to examine fairly the very beſt of your works, you would find them to have been ſo imperfect; to have fallen ſo far below the ſtandard towards which a higher meaſure of antecedent holineſs would have advanced them; to have been ſo far from proceeding from truly Chriſtian motives, and from thoſe only; to have been ſo ſtained in part, either in the intention, or in the execution, or in both, with various degrees of guilt; that you would tremble at the thought of producing them as pure, as examples of perfect obedience before God. Before him we all ſtand condemned ſinners. From the law it is impoſſible to derive forgiveneſs. If we are ſaved, we muſt be ſaved by one able to make an atonement. We muſt be ſaved by unmerited grace through a Redeemer. We muſt receive ſalvation as a free gift through faith in Jeſus Chriſt the Son of the Moſt High. Renounce then, unreſervedly renounce, all preſumptuous ideas of merit in yourſelves. Look to the croſs on which the promiſed

promiſed Redeemer died, and to that only. Preſent yourſelves as ſuppliants for mercy through faith in his atoning blood. It is only by his atoning blood that your ſins can be waſhed away. It is only by faith that the fruits and merits of the death of Chriſt can be received and applied to the benefit of your ſoul. But remember that, if you wiſh Chriſt to be your Saviour, you muſt receive him as your Maſter. If you deſire a juſtifying faith, it muſt be a living faith. It muſt be a faith wrought by the Holy Ghoſt. It muſt be a faith which governs the heart. It muſt be a faith which worketh by love. It muſt be a faith which labours after univerſal holineſs. You muſt give up yourſelves wholly to Chriſt. You muſt make it your conſtant object, and your ſupreme delight, to obey all the commandments of your Lord; to walk not after the fleſh, but after the Spirit; to have your heart filled with Chriſtian tempers, and controlled by Chriſtian motives. Theſe bleſſings are in no degree to be attained by your own ſtrength. They are entirely the gifts of the Spirit of God. But Chriſt, by his death, has purchaſed them for all who ſeek them through him. If you ſeek them by daily and fervent prayer, offered in his name and grounded on his merits; if, in pro-

portion to the grace which he has vouchſafed, you conſtantly ſtrive to act as his faithful ſervants; he will beſtow them in larger and larger abundance upon you. Then will he acknowledge you for his own at the laſt day; and while he commands the wicked, who remain under the curſe of the law, to depart into everlaſting fire; will addreſs to you the unchangeable benediction, "Come, ye bleſſed "of my Father: inherit the kingdom pre- "pared for you from the foundation of the "world."

Upon 1803

SERMON III.

On the Nature and Efficacy of Divine Grace.

2 COR. xii. 9.

And he ſaid unto me, "My Grace is ſufficient "for thee: for my Strength is made perfect "in Weakneſs."

FOR the accompliſhment of any uſeful deſign, it appears neceſſary, that all inferior inſtruments ſhould be ſubjected to one ſuperintending power. In the ſtructures of human mechaniſm, however numerous, however complicated may be the contrivances by which the ultimate object is purſued; ſome main-ſpring, ſome maſter-wheel, ſome ruling force, ſome preponderating weight, actuates and controls all the ſubordinate parts, and gives motion and efficacy to the whole. It

is thus, if we may preſume to connect together by any ſemblance of compariſon the labours of terreſtrial feebleneſs and ignorance with the operations of infinite perfection; that the divine wiſdom conducts its plans to their appointed ſucceſs. Earth and air, cold and heat, clouds and ſunſhine, the interchange of day and night, the gradual viciſſitudes of ſeaſons, and all the principles of vegetation by which food is produced and ripened for mankind: theſe are all but means governed and directed by the providence of God. Youth and age, health and ſickneſs, affluence and poverty, proſperity and diſtreſs: theſe and all other ſecondary cauſes through which ſalvation is vouchſafed to man, are all but inſtruments in the hands of the Firſt Cauſe: theſe are all but miniſtering agents ſubſervient to the ſway of the grace of Chriſt.

Never perhaps was the power of divine grace more glorioufly diſplayed than in its effects wrought through the inſtrumentality of St. Paul! Never perhaps among all the children of Adam did it form to itſelf a more able, or a more willing miniſter! This great inſtructor of the Gentiles, in vindicating his character and his apoſtolical authority againſt the inſinuations of falſe teachers among the Corinthians, was led to ſpecify, among other evidences

evidences of his divine commiſſion, the viſions and revelations with which he had been favoured in a very uncommon meaſure by his Lord. He deſcribes himſelf as having been caught up into Paradiſe; into the third Heaven, whether in the body or out of the body he knew not; and as having heard unſpeakable words, words not to be uttered by human lips. The Saviour of the world, however, ſhewed himſelf not unmindful that his holy apoſtle was but man. According to the wiſdom diſplayed in all the diſpenſations of his providence, he tempered his extraordinary mercies with ſuch a portion of humiliation and fatherly chaſtiſement, as might guard his beloved ſervant againſt ſpiritual pride, and extravagant ideas of his ſuperiority over his fellow Chriſtians. *There was given* to St. Paul, to uſe his own words, *a thorn in the fleſh, the meſſenger of Satan to buffet him, leſt he ſhould be exalted above meaſure through the abundance of the revelations.* This thorn in the fleſh, the preciſe nature of which, as being well known to the Corinthians, among whom he had reſided eighteen months, it was not neceſſary to particulariſe; evidently appears to have been ſome perſonal infirmity, which St. Paul regarded as likely to impair his ability and leſſen his uſefulneſs

as a preacher of religion. In the verſe from which the text is taken, he ſtiles it an *infirmity*. In his epiſtle to the Galatians, he alludes to it in ſimilar expreſſions. *Ye know how through infirmity of the fleſh I preached the goſpel unto you at the firſt. And my temptation which was in my fleſh, ye deſpiſed not nor rejected.* From the tenth and eleventh chapters of his ſecond epiſtle to the church at Corinth, we learn that the enemies of the apoſtle repreſented him as *rude in ſpeech, contemptible in ſpeech, and weak in bodily preſence.* Here perhaps we obtain ſome inſight into the nature of the infirmity with which he was viſited. But whatever the thorn in the fleſh might be, the apoſtle, grieved at the proſpect of its interference with the efficaciouſneſs of his miniſtry, with earneſt and repeated ſupplication beſought the Lord Jeſus that it might depart from him. The prayer Chriſt did not ſee fit to grant. The motive which prompted it he beheld with complacence. He beheld the heart of his apoſtle filled with zeal for his glory. But he knew, what the apoſtle could not know, the methods by which his glory might beſt be promoted. He knew that the feebleneſs of the ſervant would conduce to the glory of his Lord; that the imperfection of the inſtrument would magnify the ſtrength

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of him by whom it was wielded; that the ſucceſsful labours of the apoſtle, in the face of circumſtances which might in ſome degree contribute to excite ſcorn or diſguſt, would prove that the *faith* of his converts *ſtood not in the wiſdom of men, but in the power of God.* He replied unto the petitions of St. Paul; *My grace is ſufficient for thee: for my ſtrength is made perfect in weakneſs.* "Be "not afraid; be not diſpirited. I the Lord "am able to complete my own work. My "grace, without which thou canſt do no-"thing, ſhall be with thee: and that grace "can accompliſh every thing."

In this reply of our Saviour to the requeſt of his apoſtle, we read a diſtinct intimation of the nature and the importance of divine grace. The inſtruction thus conveyed to St. Paul is applicable to every man. In the farther conſideration therefore of the ſubject, I propoſe, in the preſent and in two ſubſequent diſcourſes, to explain the neceſſity of the grace of Chriſt to ſalvation; to prove that every man is enabled to obtain this grace; to indicate the means by which it is to be acquired; to point out the teſts and proofs by which the poſſeſſion of it is to be aſcertained; and to evince its complete and unalterable ſufficiency. Some obſervations will afterwards

be ſeverally addreſſed, to thoſe who diſregard or deſpiſe the grace of God, and to thoſe who labour to obtain and to improve it.

I. The grace of Chriſt is indiſpenſably neceſſary to ſalvation.

Is a long train of argument requiſite to eſtabliſh this propoſition? Contemplate the picture which the Scriptures preſent of the corruption of human nature; and of the conſequences, in which that corruption by its own inherent tendencies would terminate. If *the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth*; if *the heart is deceitful above all things, and deſperately wicked*; if *in us*, by nature, *dwelleth no good thing*; if *we are altogether gone out of the way, altogether become abominable*, ſo that by nature *there is no one that ſeeketh after God, no one that is righteous, no not one:* how is ſanctification to be attained; how is deſtruction to be eſcaped? How is the Ethiopian to change his ſkin, and the leopard his ſpots? How is the ſervant of ſin, to become the ſervant of holineſs? How is the ſoul, groaning under the chains of the prince of darkneſs, to be reſtored to the glorious liberty of the children of God? How is the boſom which is the habitation of every impure thought, every unhallowed de-

ſire, to become the temple of the Holy Ghoſt? Will you anſwer, "By repentance; by faith "in Chriſt; by perſeverance in every good "work?" Be it ſo. Is repentance then, is faith, is perſeverance in good works in your own power? Conſult the Scriptures on each of theſe points. The Scriptures call upon every man every where to repent. But do they affirm, do they imply, that man can repent by his own ſtrength? Do they admit the poſſibility of ſuch a ſuppoſition? What then is the import of the expreſſions of the prophet Jeremiah, expreſſions not leſs wiſely, than piouſly interwoven into the liturgy of our church; *Turn thou us unto thee, O Lord; and we ſhall be turned: turn thou me, O Lord; and I ſhall be turned: for thou art the Lord my God* (*a*)? What is the import of the following paſſages in the writings of St. Luke and St. Paul? *God hath exalted Jeſus to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Iſrael. Then hath God alſo to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life. In meekneſs inſtruct thoſe that oppoſe themſelves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth* (*b*). Is it not clear that repentance is to be ſought as a gift from God; as a gift through the grace of Jeſus Chriſt? Enquire farther how the caſe

(*a*) Jerem. xxxi. 18. Lam. v. 21. (*b*) Acts, v. 31. xi. 18. 2 Tim. ii. 25.

ſtands

ſtands with reſpect to faith. *Without faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe God. By faith a man is to be juſtified. Believe in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and thou ſhalt be ſaved* (*c*). But do the Scriptures deſcribe faith as an attainment within the graſp of human ability? What is the language of the Son of God? *No man can come to me, except the Father who hath ſent me draw him* (*d*). What ſaith St. Luke? *Apollos helped them much, which had believed through grace. The Lord opened the heart of Lydia, that ſhe attended unto the things which were ſpoken of Paul, and was baptized* (*e*). How ſpeaks St. Paul? *Faith is the fruit of the Spirit. No man can ſay that Jeſus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghoſt. To you, O Philippians, it is given to believe on Chriſt* (*f*). Then with reſpect to practical holineſs. Are Chriſtian tempers and good works the produce of your own exertions? Do you learn ſuch imaginations from the Scriptures? *It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do. It is God who maketh you perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleaſing in his ſight. Let us have grace whereby we may ſerve God acceptably. Righteouſneſs, truth, love, long-ſuffering, gentleneſs, goodneſs, meekneſs, tempe-*

(*c*) Heb. xi. 6. Rom. iii. 28. Gal. ii. 16. Acts, xvi. 31. (*d*) John, vi. 44. (*e*) Acts, xviii. 27. xvi. 14. (*f*) Gal. v. 22. 1 Cor. xii. 2. Philipp. i. 29.

rance,

rance, are the fruits of the Spirit (*g*). It is thus that an examination into the natural ſtate of the human heart, and an enquiry into the method by which the different graces of the Chriſtian character are wrought in man, conſtrain us to aſcribe every thing in us which is good, to God, the Author of every good and perfect gift. They conſtrain us to acknowledge, that as St. Paul, depreſſed by his thorn in the fleſh, could be enabled to preach the goſpel with ſucceſs, only by the grace of Chriſt: ſo by that grace only, can man, labouring under his natural corruption, be enabled to attain eternal life. They conſtrain us to acknowledge as indiſpenſably neceſſary to ſalvation that total change, which the Scriptures delineate under a variety of figurative expreſſions, eſſentially of the ſame meaning, and calculated, partly to exemplify its magnitude and effect, partly to denote its ſupreme importance: a change which the word of God attributes excluſively to the ſanctifying influence of the Holy Ghoſt purchaſed for us by the ſacrifice of Jeſus Chriſt. They conſtrain us to confeſs, that *except a man be born of water and of the Spirit*; emblematically of water by baptiſm, and ſubſtantially of the Spirit by the renovation of his corrupt nature unto holineſs; *he cannot enter into the kingdom*

(*g*) Philipp. ii. 13. Heb. xiii. 21. xii. 28. Gal. v. 22, 23. Eph. v. 9.

of

of God (*b*). They conſtrain us to confeſs, that we muſt become *new creatures* (*i*); that we muſt *be transformed by the renewing of our minds;* that we muſt *put off the old man, which is corrupt, and be renewed in the ſpirit of our minds;* that we muſt *put on the new man, which after God is created in righteouſneſs and true holineſs* (*k*). They conſtrain us to confeſs, that if we are to be ſaved, *we are to be ſaved by the waſhing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghoſt* (*l*). We are to be ſaved by receiving from the Spirit of God, not thoſe extraordinary and now no longer needed powers, which were requiſite to enable the firſt preachers of Chriſtianity to confirm the truth of the new religion by the evidence of miraculous atteſtations; but that influence which in every age is no leſs neceſſary to the ſalvation of every Chriſtian, than it was in primitive times to the ſalvation of the apoſtles; that influence which alone can enlighten the underſtanding, rectify the will, diſpoſe us to repentance, eſtabliſh us in faith, renew the heart unto godlineſs, ſupply ſtrength to withſtand temptation, inſpire holy reſolutions and ability to fulfil them, and finally ſeal the ſtedfaſt ſervants of Chriſt through continuance in faith, and in good works the fruits of faith, to eternal life.

(*b*) John, iii. 3. 5. (*i*) 2 Cor. v. 17. Gal. vi. 15.
(*k*) Rom. xii. 2. Eph. iv. 23, 24. (*l*) Tit. iii 5.

II. The

II. The grace of Chriſt, as neceſſary to ſalvation, is placed within the reach of every man.

Does this aſſertion, ſo full of conſolation and encouragement to the terrified ſinner, ſtand firm on Scriptural authority? On that authority it ſtands immovable. *God hath no pleaſure that the wicked ſhould die; but that he ſhould return from his ways and live. God our Saviour will have all men to be ſaved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth. Go ye into all the world, and preach the Goſpel to every creature. He that ſpared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all; how ſhall he not with him alſo freely give all things:* all things needful to ſalvation, and as of all things the moſt needful, his grace? *If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more ſhall your heavenly Father give the holy Spirit to them that aſk him* (*m*)!

But of what avail is the rope, which you hold forth to the ſhipwrecked mariner; if his eye is too dim to diſcern it, his hand too feeble to graſp it? Although it is apparent that God freely offers his grace to every man; is it alſo clear that every man has the power of accepting it? May there not be a natural or a moral impoſſibility, which may diſable the periſhing

(*m*) Ezek. xviii. 23. 1 Tim. ii. 3, 4. Mark, xvi. 15. Rom. viii. 32. Luke, xi. 13.

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ſinner from deriving benefit from the means of deliverance when placed before him? Among the numerous doubts and ſuſpicions which have diſquieted the breaſts of Chriſtians, that which is here preſented, if one of the moſt diſtreſſing, is alſo one of the moſt extraordinary. Do you aſcribe to the Moſt High deluſive offers? To the God of truth, do you aſcribe ſhifts, and pretences and evaſions, which in the common tranſactions of life you would diſclaim yourſelf, which you would condemn in any one of your fellow-creatures? Is it thus that you diſhonour the Father of mercies, and render nugatory his gracious propoſal of univerſal ſalvation? *God is no reſpecter of perſons.* The offer which he makes to every man, he enables every man to accept. No man ever committed any ſin, but the grace of God was ready to have qualified him to withſtand it. No man ever committed any ſin, but he might have obtained the grace of God neceſſary for effectual reſiſtance, had he antecedently choſen to apply for it in proportion to his knowledge. Such has been the fact with reſpect to every ſin which ever was committed. Such will be the fact with reſpect to every ſin which ever ſhall be committed. God is not the Author of evil.

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He tempts no man to ſin. He places no man under a neceſſity of tranſgreſſing the divine law. He leaves no man, in any inſtance, deſtitute of the power of obtaining that grace which would have preſerved him from tranſgreſſion. He mocks no man; however ſome, who have blindly miſinterpreted his word, have repreſented him as mocking the great maſs of the human race; he mocks no man by groundleſs hopes, by calls which cannot be heard, by commands which cannot be obeyed, by offers which cannot be accepted. He ſubjects no man, he permits no man to be ſubject, to a natural or to a moral impoſſibility; diſtinctions, if tried by fair reaſoning, in this caſe without a difference, of accepting the mercy which he propoſes to all. God, the God of mercy, is faithful and juſt and true in all his dealings. Could he be faithful and juſt and true in all his dealings, if, while deſcribing himſelf in terms the moſt comprehenſive as holding forth a bleſſing to all, he held it forth only to ſome: if, while in language the moſt impreſſive, he urged every man to accept his mercy, he knew that numbers were by his predetermined purpoſe ordained to remain for ever deſtitute of the power of accepting it?

God is love: love to every being which he has made. Could he be *love* to a being, who might have grounds for replying to him at the day of judgement; "Thou ſenteſt me "into the world incapable of ſerving thee. "Thou calledſt me; but thou continuedſt me "under an impoſſibility of turning unto thee "when thou calledſt. And now thou con-"ſigneſt me to everlaſting perdition, for not "doing that which by nature I could not "do; that which by grace thou wouldeſt not "enable me to perform." God will be clear when he is judged. The judge of the whole earth ſhall do right. He is *love*, univerſal love. On St. Paul he freely beſtowed the grace, which under the apoſtle's infirmity was requiſite. To every man the grace neceſſary to counteract and purify human corruption is freely offered. To every man is the power given of accepting it, of improving under it, of profiting by it unto ſalvation. *The grace of God, which bringeth ſalvation, hath appeared unto all men; teaching us that denying ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world* (*n*): enabling every man to diſ-

(*n*) Tit. ii. 11, 12.

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cern and to will that which is right, to live acceptably to his Maker in godlineſs and true holineſs; and thus ſtopping every mouth before God, thus cutting off all excuſes from thoſe who complain of ſtrictneſs and difficulties in religion, and allege their natural weakneſs and depravity as a plea for diſobeying the commandments of their Lord.

III. The means, by which the grace of God is to be obtained, are diſtinctly revealed to us.

What are thoſe means? The firſt is prayer. *Aſk, and it ſhall be given unto you: ſeek, and ye ſhall find: knock, and it ſhall be opened unto you* (o). But do theſe promiſes relate to the gift of the Holy Spirit? Our Saviour proceeds to ſhew by a familiar and moſt encouraging illuſtration, that the Holy Ghoſt is their immediate object. *If a ſon ſhall aſk bread of any of you that is a father; will he give him a ſtone? Or, if he aſk a fiſh; will he for a fiſh give him a ſerpent? Or, if he ſhall aſk an egg; will he offer him a ſcorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more ſhall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that aſk him!* But is it not poſſible that

(o) Luke, xi. 9, &c.

we may pray for the Holy Spirit; and yet fail of receiving the full bleſſing which we deſire? Undoubtedly it is poſſible. *You* may *aſk and receive not, becauſe you aſk amiſs* (*p*). Can prayer then fail to obtain that bleſſing, which God has promiſed to beſtow on thoſe who ſeek it by prayer? Genuine prayer will never be diſappointed. Let your prayers be real prayers, and they ſhall ſucceed. But if your prayers for ſanctification through the Spirit of God are deſtitute of the qualifications which are neceſſary to render any prayer acceptable; if while you draw nigh unto your Lord with your mouth, and honour him with your lips, your heart is far from him; aſſuredly you will worſhip him in vain. What then are the qualifications eſſential to the ſucceſs of our prayers for the Holy Spirit? In the firſt place, faith; a ſtedfaſt conviction that God will perform his promiſe of beſtowing the gift of the Holy Ghoſt on every man who ſeeks it aright. *If any of you lack wiſdom*, ſaith St. James; *let him aſk of God, that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it ſhall be given him. But let him aſk in faith, nothing wavering: for he that wavereth is like a wave of the ſea driven with the wind and toſſed: for let not that man*

(*p*) James, iv. 3.

think

think that he ſhall receive any thing of the Lord (*q*). Wiſdom is to be derived only through the Holy Ghoſt, who is denominated the *Spirit of Wiſdom* (*r*). The faith, which is indiſpenſable to the ſucceſs of petitions for this gift of the Holy Ghoſt, is equally neceſſary when you pray for any other of the Chriſtian graces. In the next place, your ſupplications muſt be accompanied with an humble conſciouſneſs of your helpleſs ſtate by nature, and of the value of the bleſſings which you requeſt. For otherwiſe, they will be devoid of that earneſtneſs and fervency, which St. Paul connects with the ſervice of the Lord; which another apoſtle deſcribes as characteriſtic of *the prayer that availeth much* (*s*). And farther, your petitions for the aid of the Holy Spirit muſt be perſevering. Your heavenly Father may wiſely determine to prove you by delaying to comply with them. Will you loſe that renewal of heart, without which you cannot enter into the kingdom of God, by diſcontinuing your ſupplications? Be not diſcouraged: your ſupplications, though not yet granted, are heard. The Lord is not ſlack concerning his promiſe. God only waiteth to be gracious.

(*q*) James, i. 5—7. (*r*) Iſaiah, xi. 2. Eph. i. 17.
(*s*) Rom. xii. 2. James, v. 16.

Be not weary in well-doing, in urging your requeſt before the throne of grace; *for in due time you will reap, if you faint not:* in due time, and that too a time ſufficiently ſpeedy to meet the exigences of your ſituation, you ſhall obtain the guidance, the ſupport, the conſolation of the Spirit of God: guidance, ſupport, or conſolation, not perhaps exactly according in kind or degree with the ſpecial object of your prayer, but better adapted to promote your true intereſt and the glory of the all-knowing giver. St. Paul thrice beſought the Lord in vain, that his infirmity might depart from him. Was his perſevering ſupplication unrewarded? He received in return an aſſurance, that the grace of Chriſt ſhould be with him; and in a meaſure abundantly ſufficient to ſecure thoſe objects, for the attainment of which the apoſtle had been ſolicitous that his thorn in the fleſh ſhould be removed.

In addition to habitual prayer, you have yet another duty to fulfil, if you are ſincerely deſirous of the continual aſſiſtance of divine grace. You muſt diligently labour to profit in piety and holineſs by the grace which has already been beſtowed. *To him*, ſaith our Lord, *that hath, ſhall be given:* to him who has

has ſtudied to improve, as inſtruments of godlineſs, the means and ſupplies of divine grace which have been placed within his power, additional grace ſhall be afforded. *From him that hath not;* from that ſlothful and wicked ſervant who has neglected the talent which his rightful maſter had entruſted to his care, under an injunction that it ſhould be turned to advantage; *even that which he hath ſhall be taken away;* the grace which he had received and deſpiſed ſhall be withdrawn.

Finally, if you would obtain the aſſiſtance of divine grace, you muſt apply for it through the mediation of your Redeemer. Through whoſe merits have we acceſs to God? Through the merits of him who died for us. In whoſe name are all our prayers to be preſented to the Father? In the name of his beloved Son. Whoſe is the grace which we ſolicit? The grace of the Lord Jeſus. "My grace," ſaid Chriſt to his apoſtle, "is ſufficient for thee." Through him, and unto him, let us apply for the ſanctifying influence of his Spirit.

The conſideration, however brief, of the ſubjects which have already been noticed, has unavoidably occupied ſo much time, that the remaining heads muſt be deferred unto a

future diſcourſe. Let me conclude, therefore, with addreſſing to you ſome few words of general application, drawn from the remarks which have been laid before you.

Endeavour throughout life to bear in mind that of yourſelves you can do nothing: that you inherit a nature radically corrupted, prone to ſin, averſe to piety and holineſs. Unleſs you build your religion upon this foundation, you build it upon ſand: for you do not build it upon the only ſolid foundation, that foundation, that corner-ſtone, which is laid in the word of God. But beware of deceiving yourſelves by imagining, that this original corruption of your nature affords you any plea for continuing in ſin. The grace of God, by which you may be preſerved from falling into ſin, by which you may be redeemed from the ſtrongeſt bonds of depravity, is freely offered to you through Chriſt at all times; and power is at all times given unto you from God to accept it. Conſider St. Paul's account of himſelf. *In my fleſh*, ſaith he, *dwelleth no good thing. I cannot do that which I would. The good which I approve, I do not. The evil which I diſapprove, I do.* This is the deſcription of his ſtate by nature. But how ſpeaks he in another paſſage? *I can do all things through Chriſt that ſtrength-*

ſtrengtheneth me. Here he ſpeaks of himſelf as under the influence of divine grace: and as thus enabled to perform the whole of his duty. Chriſt is at all times ready to ſtrengthen every one of you to perform your whole duty; and whenever you fail, you fail by your own fault. Turn your eyes then upon the Bible to learn the full extent of your duty. Beware of being ſatisfied with that half-religion, that ſhadow of Chriſtianity, which in the eyes of the world is regarded as the complete ſubſtance; that counterfeit coin which paſſes current with multitudes, but bears not the ſtamp of the King of kings. Take your ſtandard of duty from the word of God; for by that ſtandard you will be tried at the laſt day. See what devotedneſs to God, what holineſs of temper and of conduct, what living not unto yourſelf but to Chriſt who died for you, the Scriptures require. Say not within your heart, "Theſe things cannot be "required of me; for I cannot attain unto "them." They are required of you; for ſo God hath announced to you beforehand. You can attain unto them; for God offers to enable you by his grace. Seek then his grace, that you may attain to that holineſs, without which no man ſhall ſee the Lord.

So

So ſhall your ſins be blotted out, and mercy and ſalvation extended to you through the atonement of the Lord Jeſus. But if you vainly perſuade yourſelf that you may make religion a ſecondary concern: if you fall ſhort of ſcriptural holineſs, becauſe you would not ſtrive for the grace through which you might have performed it: you will ſtand ſelf-condemned at the judgement-ſeat of Chriſt, and will confeſs that God would have had you to be ſaved, but that you have yourſelf pulled down deſtruction with your own hands upon your own head.

1807 1808

SERMON IV.

On the Nature and Efficacy of Divine Grace.

2. COR. xii. 9.

And he ſaid unto me: " *My Grace is ſufficient* " *for thee: for my ſtrength is made perfect* " *in weakneſs.*"

IN a former diſcourſe on this paſſage, when I had explained to you the occaſion on which the words of Chriſt, as quoted in the text, were ſpoken; and the particular ſenſe in which they referred to the exiſting ſituation of St. Paul: I endeavoured to ſhew that the inſtruction which they conveyed was applicable to all men. I laid open to you, firſt, the evidence which the ſcriptures furniſh of the indiſpenſable neceſſity of divine grace to ſalvation; ſecondly, the unbounded mercy with

with which God offers his grace to every man, and gives to every man the power of accepting it: and thirdly, the means by the proper uſe of which this ſanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit may aſſuredly be obtained. Regarding therefore the obſervations which were ſtated under thoſe three branches of the general ſubject, as in an adequate meaſure preſent to your recollection; I now proceed, in humble dependence on the bleſſing of God, to unfold to you the marks by which you may judge every man for himſelf, whether your hearts are under the government of the Holy Spirit. I truſt to be enabled, on a future occaſion, to execute the remainder of my plan as originally ſtated, by manifeſting the complete and certain ſufficiency of divine grace for every purpoſe for which it can be deſired or beſtowed; and by a general application of the whole ſubject to perſons of different deſcriptions.

IV. I propoſe to ſet before you the teſts and proofs by which the effectual poſſeſſion of divine grace is aſcertained.

A tree is known by its fruits. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit: neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. If your

your diſpoſitions and your conduct are characteriſed by the fruits of the Holy Spirit; you may humbly confide that you are under his effectual guidance. If your hearts and lives do not habitually diſplay thoſe demonſtrations of his prevailing influence; you are not authoriſed to draw that concluſion.

What then are *the fruits of the Spirit?* All *good and perfect gifts;* for *every good and perfect gift is from above:* all the graces of the Chriſtian character; for every one of thoſe graces is a plant foreign to the corrupt ſoil of the human heart, and can flouriſh there only in conſequence of being ſown and nurtured by the foſtering care of the Spirit of God. In the ſacred writings, theſe fruits or gifts of the Holy Ghoſt are ſometimes mentioned ſingly; accordingly, as the inſpired penman was led by his immediate ſubject to delineate ſome particular feature of true religion: ſometimes, when the train of his argument carried him into a wider range of deſcription, ſeveral of them are noticed at once, and exhibited in one view. To collect from the word of God the various fruits of the Holy Spirit into one glorious aſſemblage; to illuſtrate the nature of each; and to trace the preciſe courſe of enquiry neceſſary to qualify you to eſtimate the degree, in which

they are ſeverally produced in yourſelf; this would be a taſk which would demand, in addition to other requiſites, the compaſs of many diſcourſes. On the preſent occaſion, therefore, I muſt content myſelf with calling your attention to ſome few of thoſe fruits, and with ſelecting ſuch as are of prime importance.

To this man will I look, ſaith the Lord; even to him that is poor and of a contrite ſpirit, and trembleth at my word. Bleſſed are the poor in ſpirit: for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven. Thus ſaith the high and lofty one, that inhabiteth eternity, whoſe name is holy: I dwell with him that is of a contrite and humble ſpirit (*a*). Have theſe fruits of the Holy Ghoſt, humility, and repentance, been wrought in you? Are you thoroughly penetrated with the conviction of the inherent heinouſneſs of ſin? Do you acknowledge that every tranſgreſſion of the divine law is treaſon againſt the ſovereign of the univerſe: ingratitude to your moſt bounteous benefactor: abomination in the ſight of a God of holineſs: a forfeiture of the whole of that future reward, which was promiſed only to perfect obedience: and a juſt ground for the puniſhment denounced againſt all, who after

(*a*) Iſaiah, lxvi. 2. Matt. v. 3. Iſaiah, lvii. 15.

receiv-

receiving, as all men have received, ability to perform their duty, ſhall be found guilty of any act of rebellion? Are you convinced, that by wilful tranſgreſſion you have proved yourſelf rebellious? Are you convinced, by contemplating the depravity of the nature common to all men, and the reſult of your perſonal experience, that you muſt deſpair, if abandoned to yourſelf, of reſiſting the future allurements of ſin? Do you feel an abhorrence of ſin, becauſe of its ſinfulneſs? Are you earneſtly ſolicitous to be delivered from ſin, not merely on account of the penalty which it entails, but on account of its native deformity, its offenſiveneſs in the ſight of God? Do you begin to ſee the beauty and excellence of holineſs? Are you ſubmiſſively willing to be reſcued from guilt and its conſequences, and to be reconciled to God, by ſuch methods, whatever they may be, as he in his wiſdom ſhall ordain? Then *hath God granted* unto you the grace of *repentance!* Then hath he wrought in you by his Spirit that ſelf-abaſement which is the foundation of juſtifying faith in the Lord Jeſus!

The juſt ſhall live by faith: and *faith is the fruit of the ſpirit* (*b*). Is that fruit manifeſted

(*b*) Habb. ii. 4. Rom. i. 17. Gal. iii. 11. v. 22.

in you? Do you receive with reverent acquieſcence the ſcriptural revelation of the nature and the office of the Meſſiah? With reſpect to myſteries, concerning which the limited underſtanding of man is of itſelf utterly incompetent to pronounce any deciſion; do you bring every thought into captivity before the declarations of God? Do you behold your Redeemer as the teacher of the will of God to man? Do you behold his blood as the fountain opened for the waſhing away of ſin? Do you look to him as the Lamb of God; the only, the all-ſufficient ſacrifice, by which atonement is made for tranſgreſſors? Do you cordially believe that there is ſalvation in no other: that there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby you may be ſaved? Do you look up to him as your advocate, your continual interceſſor with the Father? Do you elevate your thoughts to him as the King of kings, ſeated on the throne of glory at the right hand of God, Lord of angels and archangels, of principalities and powers throughout the whole extent of creation: as head over all things to his church, diſpenſer of light and ſtrength and life, the raiſer of the dead, the appointed judge of the world?

Do

Do you renounce as altogether indefenſible, as irreconcilably repugnant to the divine plan of redemption, every pretenſion to the pardon of ſin, every claim to the inheritance of the ſaints, grounded on any ſuppoſed merit of your own? Do you deſire to be found at the laſt day clothed excluſively in the righteouſneſs of Chriſt; acceptable ſolely through the merits of his atonement? Then has *the grace of our Lord Jeſus, the author and finiſher of our faith*, been *exceeding abundant* to you *with faith which is in Chriſt*, even the *faith which is the operation of God* (*c*).

All Chriſtians however are not as yet perfect Chriſtians. All who are genuine members of the true church, the myſtical body of our Lord, are not yet *come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man; unto the meaſure of the ſtature of the fulneſs of Chriſt* (*d*). There may be ſome in this congregation, who, at the ſame time that they humbly truſt that they have laboured to attain grace unto repentance and faith, perceive ſuch ample grounds for deploring their deficiencies in both, that they tremble leſt they ſhould be regarded in the ſight of God as effectually

(*c*) 1 Tim. i. 14. Heb. xii. 2. Col. ii. 12. (*d*) Eph. iv. 13.

poſſeſſed of neither. Chriſt will not break the bruiſed reed. His lambs he will carry in his boſom. He beholds with compaſſion and forbearance; he cheers with conſolation and encouragement, the mourner who feareth for his ſoul. He ſtrengthens the weak hands and confirms the feeble knees. Examine then thine own breaſt, whoſoever thou mayeſt be who art tempted to deſpond; examine whether it be thy earneſt and habitual deſire to be enabled to repent and to believe. Examine whether this be the ſpirit of thy ſupplications before the throne of grace: "Make me a contrite heart, O God! Lord! "I believe: help thou mine unbelief." Examine whether thy ſorrow for ſin, thy exertions in purſuit of holineſs, correſpond with thy prayers. If to theſe enquiries thou receiveſt the anſwer of a good conſcience, be comforted. Thou art already under the teaching of divine grace. Perſevere in thy courſe; and the Lord Jeſus will cauſe thy *godly ſorrow to work repentance to ſalvation not to be repented of; and will perfect that which is lacking in thy faith. Bleſſed are they that hunger and thirſt after righteouſneſs: for they ſhall be filled* (*e*).

(*e*) 2 Cor. vii. 10. 1 Theſ. iii. 10. Matt. v. 6.

I pro-

I proceed to the conſideration of other fruits of the Holy Spirit.

The Lord direct your hearts, ſaith St. Paul, *into the love of God. The love of God is ſhed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghoſt* (*f*). Has the Holy Ghoſt ſhed abroad the love of God in your heart? Have you evidences to prove that you poſſeſs this fruit of the Spirit? Do you love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your ſoul, and all your ſtrength; and the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, whom he hath ſent? Do you ſerve your Creator and Redeemer in ſimplicity and godly ſincerity? Are you anxious to further, according to the talents and opportunities which you enjoy, the glory of God, and the kingdom of his Son? Among the fruits of the Spirit particularly mentioned by St. Paul, righteouſneſs ſtands conſpicuous: and righteouſneſs, as exemplified in the exerciſe of holy diſpoſitions towards the Deity, for of that branch alone of righteouſneſs I at preſent ſpeak, is a convincing proof of love to God. Have you this proof to bring forward? By piety, by devotion, by every act of religion which has God for its immediate object; by the cultivation of faith, and fear, and love, and gratitude, and reſignation; do you witneſs before

(*f*) 2 Theſ. iii. 5. Rom. v. 5.

the world a good confeſſion, that his favour is your aim, his ſalvation the prize which you purſue? If it be your fervent deſire and your habitual prayer to be enabled to love the Lord your God; then are you already under the teaching of his Spirit. If you are thus enabled to ſet your heart upon him; then *hath God given unto you the Spirit of love:* then *the love of the Father is in you* (*g*).

Ye yourſelves are taught of God to love one another. The Lord make you to increaſe and abound in love one towards another, and towards all men (*h*). This alſo is the language of St. Paul to the Theſſalonians. Has God wrought in you the grace of love towards your fellow creatures? Do you love your neighbour as yourſelf, with a pure heart, and with charity unfeigned, fervently? Do you love him thus becauſe God commands you to love him thus; becauſe an apoſtle hath ſaid, that if God ſo loved us that he ſent his Son to be the propitiation for our ſins, we ought alſo to love one another; becauſe your Saviour has declared, that love to others is the diſtinguiſhing mark, by which all men ſhall know that you are his diſciples (*i*)? Do you

(*g*) 2 Tim. i. 7. 1 John, ii. 15. (*h*) 1 Theſ. iii. 12. iv. 9.
(*i*) 1 John, iv. 10, 11. John, xiii. 35.

love

love your enemies? And do you love them becauſe, while we were yet enemies, God loved us? *Love worketh no ill to his neighbour.* *Love*, or as it is elſewhere expreſſed, *Charity, ſuffereth long and is kind; envieth not, vaunteth not itſelf; is not puffed up, doth not behave itſelf unſeemly, ſeeketh not its own, is not eaſily provoked; thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things* (*k*). Do you fulfil the law of juſtice to your neighbour by working no ill to him; by carefully abſtaining from offering injury to his perſon, to his property, or to his good-name? Have you that love for him which ſuffereth long; which is ſlow to take offence, unwearied in forgiveneſs? Have you that love which is kind: which not only abounds in acts of good will to thoſe who have manifeſted friendſhip towards you, or gratitude for benefits received from your hand; but, like the love of your heavenly Father, who maketh his ſun to ſhine on the evil as well as on the good, and ſendeth rain both on the juſt and on the unjuſt, overflows in bounteouſneſs to the unthankful and the froward? Have you that love which envieth not; which coveteth not the advantages enjoyed by any other,

(*k*) Rom. xiii. 10. 1 Cor. xiii. 4—7.

grudgeth not his comforts, repineth not at his welfare? Have you that love which vaunteth not itſelf: that love which prompts you in honour to prefer one another; nouriſhes that diſtinguiſhed fruit of the Spirit, *meekneſs*; remembers the words of the Lord Jeſus, *Bleſſed are the meek*; reſtrains you from an oſtentatious diſplay of the pre-eminence in rank, in wealth, in authority, in abilities, in knowledge, with which the common Maſter of all may have entruſted you? Have you that love which is not puffed up: which is clothed with humility; inſpires a conviction of our own unworthineſs; admoniſhes us to regard every additional degree of influence, every additional inſtrument of doing good, as a talent for the uſe of which we are to render an account before the judgement-ſeat of Chriſt; and thus, by reminding us of an aweful reſponſibility, tempers the joy excited by the acquiſition with awakened circumſpection and holy fear? Have you that love which doth not behave itſelf unſeemly: which aſſumes not a demeanour unſuitable to its ſtation; but conducts itſelf with reſpectfulneſs to ſuperiors, with courteouſneſs to inferiors, with modeſty and gentleneſs to all? Have you that love which ſeeketh not its own: that love which extin-

extinguiſheth ſelfiſhneſs; which perſuades you rather to ſubmit to injuſtice than either to diſpleaſe God, or needleſsly to give offence to man; inclines you, when deſpoiled of your cloak, rather to ſurrender your coat alſo than to maintain your rights with paſſion, or by unwarrantable methods; that love which proclaims, *look not every man on his own things, but every man alſo on the things of others* (*l*); diſpoſes you to conſult in all your undertakings the benefit of others no leſs than of yourſelf; and determines you cheerfully to make large ſacrifices of your own eaſe and advantage for the ſake of promoting even the earthly comforts, and more eſpecially the ſpiritual intereſts, of your neighbour? Have you that love which is not eaſily provoked: that love which governs the temper no leſs than the conduct; is not only long-ſuffering, unalienated by repeated injuries, but proves itſelf to be genuine by curbing every tendency to irritation, ſharpneſs of humour, haſtineſs of language, harſhneſs of deportment? Have you that love which thinketh no evil: that love which meditates no evil; permits not any unjuſt or ungenerous purpoſe againſt another to

(*l*) Philipp. ii. 4.

find ſhelter in your boſom, and ſtarts back with pain from every ſuggeſtion which tempts you to thwart his welfare: that love which imputeth no evil; entertains not hard thoughts of your neighbour, charges him not with unſubſtantiated guilt, nor treaſures up unauthoriſed ſuſpicions againſt him? Have you that love which rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; that love, which beholds with grief not merely the ſucceſs, but the very exiſtence, of rapacity, of fraud, of malice, of ſlander, of every ſcheme and device of ſin, the enemy of human happineſs preſent and future; that love, which exults in the triumph of righteouſneſs, in the manifeſtation of innocence, in the eſtabliſhment of truth; in every event which evinces or confirms the power of the goſpel over the hearts of men, and thus, while it redounds to the glory of God, miniſters conſolation and ſtrength to his ſervants? Have you that love, which beareth all things; that love, which bears with the infirmities, whether bodily or mental, of others; dwells not upon errors, looks not upon defects; covers, draws a veil over a multitude of failings; and, when they are forced upon thy notice, leads thee to behold them with tenderneſs and pity, and without any diminution of that affection,

affection, to which, on other grounds, thy relation, thy friend, or thy companion, is entitled from thee: and when it perceives *a man overtaken with a fault*, whiſpers to thee, *reſtore ſuch an one in the ſpirit of meekneſs; conſidering thyſelf, leſt thou alſo be tempted* (*m*)? Have you that love, which believeth all things; not that credulous facility, which turns away its ear from the leſſons of reaſon and experience; not that blind candour which *calls evil good*, and confounds the diſtinction eſtabliſhed from everlaſting to everlaſting between him who ſerveth God and him who ſerveth him not: but that love, which preſuppoſes uprightneſs where it diſcerns not evidence of iniquity; liſtens with delight to any favourable interpretation of the conduct of another; puts the kindeſt conſtruction on ſuch of his words or actions as appear ambiguous; and welcomes every circumſtance which tends to prove that he has not committed the offence aſcribed to him, or that, if he committed it, he has returned from the error of his ways? Have you that love which hopeth all things; that love which, where it cannot rationally believe that good exiſts, encourages itſelf to preſume that it will exiſt; is almoſt prepared, like Abra-

(*m*) Gal. vi. 1.

ham,

ham, againſt hope to believe in hope; deſpairs not of the converſion of the ſinner, nor ſlackens its labours to promote it? Have you that love, which endureth all things; that love, which is ready to ſuſtain hardſhips, to encounter dangers, to ſtand the brunt of ridicule and ſcorn; if thus it may be enabled to forward its firſt and deareſt purpoſe, the advancement of the temporal and eternal welfare of mankind? If the attainment of this ſcriptural love of your neighbour be the object of your fervent wiſhes, of your continual ſupplications; then are you already under the teaching of the Spirit of God. If your diſpoſitions and your conduct towards your neighbour correſpond with theſe characteriſtics of Chriſtian charity; then hath God empowered you by the Holy Ghoſt to reverence the command, *Let him who loveth God, love his brother alſo:* then *have you purified your ſoul in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren* (*n*).

There yet remains one claſs of gifts of the Holy Spirit, which requires, even in this very imperfect enumeration, briefly to be noticed: that claſs, namely, which reſpects the government of the ſenſual appetites. Among the

(*n*) 1 John, iv. 21. 1 Pet. i. 22.

fruits

fruits of the Spirit expreſsly mentioned by St. Paul in his Epiſtle to the Galatians, we find *temperance* (*o*). Among the *works of the fleſh*, which in the ſame chapter he deſcribes as oppoſed to *the fruits of the ſpirit; for the fleſh luſteth againſt the ſpirit, and the ſpirit againſt the fleſh, and theſe are contrary the one to the other;* ſins of impurity ſtand foremoſt. This obſervation may be extended to thoſe portions of the Epiſtles to the Epheſians and to the Coloſſians, in which he treats of the ſame ſubject (*p*). Purity, therefore, in its largeſt import and in its minuteſt ſubdiviſions; purity of thought, of word, and of deed, is the gift of the Holy Ghoſt. Are you able to prove that theſe fruits of the Spirit are habitually brought forth and ripened in you? Are temperance and purity diſtinguiſhing marks in your character? In proportion as your mind abhors the oppoſite crimes, you are under the teaching of the Spirit of God. If you are actually preſerved *from fulfilling the luſts of the fleſh;* then have you deciſive evidence that you *walk in the ſpirit.*

Having placed before you theſe ſelect examples of the proofs by which the poſſeſſion of divine grace is to be aſcertained; let me

(*o*) Gal. v. 23; and ſee the whole paſſage, 16—25.
(*p*) Epheſ. v. 3—9. Col. iii. 5—10.

remark,

remark, in quitting this branch of the ſubject, the unequivocal demonſtrations by which St. Paul evinced that his heart was under the effectual influence of the Holy Spirit. What repentance and humility, what faith, what gratitude, what love towards God and our Saviour, breathe in the following expreſſions! *I was a blaſphemer, and a perſecutor, and injurious. I am the leaſt of the apoſtles, that am not meet to be called an apoſtle; becauſe I perſecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am. I thank Chriſt Jeſus our Lord who hath enabled me. Chriſt Jeſus came into the world to ſave ſinners, of whom I am chief. For this cauſe I obtained mercy, that in me firſt Jeſus Chriſt might ſhew forth all long-ſuffering; for a pattern to them, which ſhould hereafter believe on him to life everlaſting. Now unto the King eternal, immortal, inviſible, the only wiſe God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen* (*q*). When he learns that the continuance of his thorn in the fleſh will redound to the honour of his Lord; the infirmity which had ſo deeply grieved him inſtantly becomes a theme of rejoicing. *Moſt gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Chriſt may reſt upon me. Therefore I take pleaſure in infirmi-*

(*q*) 1 Cor. i. xv. 9, 10. 1 Tim. i. 12, 13. 15—17.

ties,

ties, in reproaches, in neceſſities, in perſecutions, in diſtreſſes for Chriſt's ſake (*r*). Hear his ardent declarations of affection for mankind, whether of the Jewiſh or of the Gentile race. *I ſay the truth in Chriſt, I lie not, my conſcience alſo bearing me witneſs iu the Holy Ghoſt; that I have great heavineſs and continual ſorrow in my heart. For I could wiſh that myſelf were accurſed from Chriſt;* that I were ſubjected to the temporal vengeance about to overtake the Jewiſh nation; or, as ſome learned expoſitors underſtand the original phraſe, that I were made, after the example of Chriſt, a ſacrifice unto death; *for my brethren, my kinſmen according to the fleſh. My heart's deſire and prayer to God for Iſrael is, that they might be ſaved. I, Paul, the priſoner of Jeſus Chriſt for you Gentiles, deſire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you. Yea, and if I be offered upon the ſacrifice and ſervice of your faith; I joy and rejoice* (*s*). Obſerve his earneſt ſolicitude to ſubdue the corrupt appetites of human nature. *I keep under my body, and bring it into ſubjection: leſt that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myſelf ſhould be a*

(*r*) 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10. (*s*) Rom. ix. 1—4. x. 1. Eph. iii. 1. 13. Philipp. ii. 17. See on Rom. ix. 3. Doddridge in loc. and Dr. Waterland's Sermons, vol. 1. p. 77.

caſt-away (*t*). The teſtimony which in theſe paſſages of his writings the apoſtle incidentally bears concerning himſelf, is true. It was confirmed by his life and by his death. The indefatigable zeal which he exerted for the advancement of the goſpel; the long courſe of ſufferings which he cheerfully endured until they were cloſed by martyrdom; bore witneſs upon earth and will bear witneſs at the day of retribution, that his heart was governed by the Spirit of God.

In concluding this diſcourſe, for the length, to which the foregoing obſervations have extended themſelves, compels me to defer the conſideration of the remainder of the ſubject to another occaſion; let me recommend to the attention of every perſon preſent, the character of that eminent apoſtle. Was he bound by the ſovereignty of God, by the mercies of creation, of preſervation, and of redemption, to be a faithful ſervant and ſoldier of the Lord Jeſus? So likewiſe are you. Did he confeſs the obligation? You have confeſſed the ſame obligation times without number. Was the hand of Omnipotence ſtretched forth to help him? It is at all times ſtretched forth to help you. Were life and death eternal

(*t*) 1 Cor. ix. 27.

ſet

ſet before him? They are ſet before you likewiſe. Compare then his frame of mind with your own. Compare the proofs, which he gave, of acting ſtedfaſtly under the influence of divine grace, with the proofs which your conſcience may be able to produce, that you are acting in your ſtation of life in obedience to the influence of the Holy Spirit. Examine whether, like St. Paul, with an humble and penitent heart, you have diſcovered and acknowledged, that by the deeds of the law, by the leaſt impure and imperfect of human works, no fleſh ſhall be juſtified in the ſight of God. Examine whether, like him, you have ſought for ſalvation ſolely through the blood of the Croſs. Examine whether, like him, you have looked for ſanctification ſolely by the grace of Chriſt: whether, like him, you attribute to that grace alone whatever meaſure of holineſs you enjoy. Examine whether, like him, you love God and your Redeemer with all your ſoul. Examine whether, like him, you love your neighbour as yourſelf, without diſſimulation, with charity unfeigned, with a pure heart, fervently. Examine whether, like him, you keep under your body, and bring it into ſubjection. Thus may you be powerfully

aſſiſted in forming your judgement, whether as yet, like St. Paul, you are under the effectual guidance of the Spirit of grace; whether you are at preſent authoriſed to hope, that you are one of thoſe, to whom, as unto St. Paul, the Lord Jeſus will give a crown of glory at the laſt day.

1807

SERMON V.

On the Nature and Efficacy of Divine Grace.

2 COR. xii. 9.

And he ſaid unto me, "*My grace is ſufficient* "*for thee: for my ſtrength is made perfect* "*in weakneſs.*"

THE neceſſity, and the univerſality, of divine grace, the means by which it is to be obtained, and the fruits by which its influence is characteriſed, have already been laid before you. In purſuance, therefore of my original deſign, I proceed to demonſtrate, on ſcriptural grounds, the truth of the concluding leſſon which I ſtated as deducible from the text.

V. The Grace of Chriſt is all-ſufficient.

For the elucidation of this general propoſition, let the leading particulars which it comprehends be diſtinctly examined.

1. Divine grace is ſufficient to ſupply ſtrength to withſtand temptation.

He who is Head over all things to his church, he who hath all power in earth and heaven, is able to ſave to the uttermoſt all that come unto God by him. He who has inſtructed, who has commanded, his diſciples to make deliverance from temptation one of the objects of their daily prayer, will not diſregard the petition. He will not ſuffer them to be tempted above that which they are able to endure; but with the temptation will alſo make a way to eſcape, that they may be able to bear it. However attractive may be the allurement, however profound the deceit, however rugged the obſtacle, however alarming the danger, by which ſin may ſtrive to ſeduce or to deter you from the way that leadeth unto life; He who knoweth whereof we are made, and remembereth that we are but duſt, will open a path by which you may turn aſide from the extremity of the trial: and that path he will give you wiſdom to diſcern, and ſtrength to purſue.

Are we then required, are we authoriſed, that we may put to the proof the grace beſtowed upon

upon us, needleſsly to expoſe ourſelves to the aſſaults of ſin? God forbid! *It is written, thou ſhalt not tempt the Lord thy God* (*a*). If thou prayeſt not to be led into temptation, plunge not thyſelf into temptation. Are we to deſpiſe temptations which we cannot avoid? God forbid! *Happy is the man who feareth always. Let him that thinketh he ſtandeth, take heed leſt he fall* (*b*). Are we to repoſe, when tempted, with indolent ſecurity on the ſcriptural covenant of ſupport? God forbid! He, who has promiſed to beſtow food on man, requires that man ſhould till the field and reap the harveſt. Would you obtain, would you preſerve, the aſſiſtance of the Spirit of God? Employ the appointed means. To humility, to prayer, to dependence on God through Chriſt, add watchfulneſs, diligence, and exertion. Then will he, who ſendeth the former and the latter rain upon the earth, ſhower down his all-ſufficient grace upon thy heart.

But you are depreſſed by ſad experience of your inherent infirmity and corruption! Paſt failures and tranſgreſſions croud upon your remembrance; and appal you with gloomy

(*a*) Matt. iv. 7. (*b*) Prov. xxviii. 14. 1 Cor. x. 12.

misgivings as to the event of future temptation. You are half prepared to conclude in the moment of deſpondence, that you are by nature weaker than the weakeſt; that the promiſes of the goſpel will always be preached to you in vain. If, in manifeſt contradiction to the unequivocal declarations of the goſpel, you will not believe that its promiſes extend to you and to all men; if in direct oppoſition to its plaineſt commandments, you are become weary of well-doing, and determined againſt exertion; if you will neither hold faſt faith, nor labour after holineſs: moſt truly do you affirm that the word of life will in vain have been preached unto you. If you refuſe to follow the ſtandard of the Lord Jeſus; you will not be found among thoſe to whom he is the captain of ſalvation. But if you reſt with undoubting confidence on the ſcriptural covenant of grace; if in ſincerity of heart you are truly deſirous of being reſcued from the bondage of ſin, and of living henceforth as the ſervant of righteouſneſs; if you are ready to take up your croſs, to ſubmit to diſcipline, and to endure hardſhip as a good ſoldier of Jeſus Chriſt: turn to the ſcriptures, and behold them recording for your ſake the fulfilment of their own promiſes. Turn to the ſcriptures, and behold them recording for your encourage-

couragement, for your conſolation, various examples of the power of the grace of Chriſt made perfect in weakneſs: examples, wherein the grace of Chriſt diſplayed its ſufficiency by transforming timidity into fortitude, and rendering thoſe who had ſunk under former and feebler temptations, finally and ſtedfaſtly triumphant. In an early period of our Saviour's miniſtry, Nicodemus was convinced that he was an inſtructor commiſſioned from above. *We know* ſaid he, *that thou art a teacher ſent from God. For no man can do theſe miracles that thou doſt except God be with him.* He was anxious to receive inſtructions from this heavenly guide; and came to requeſt them. But how did he come? Did he come openly, in the face of day; like one whoſe heart, occupied with the concerns of ſalvation, was ſuperior to worldly conſequences; like one who, ſupremely bent on pleaſing God, was indifferent to the opinions of men? He came like a man aſhamed of his purpoſe; ſecretly, by ſtealth, in the darkneſs of night. He dreaded to be diſcovered. He recoiled at the idea of being derided by his unbelieving countrymen. He loved the praiſe of men more than the praiſe of God. Some time afterwards, in the courſe of our Redeemer's hiſtory, we meet

meet Nicodemus again. The Phariſees, reſolved on the deſtruction of Chriſt, had ſent officers to ſeize him. Theſe emiſſaries, returning without their prey, were ſharply reprehended by their employers. On that occaſion Nicodemus ventured to enquire; *Doth our Law judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doeth* (c)? And in return he was ſcornfully aſked whether he alſo was of Galilee, whether he was a diſciple of Jeſus of Nazareth; an avowal to which his courage and ſincerity were not equal. He had apparently made ſome ſmall advances in conſcientious reſolution: but was ſtill in a great meaſure remaining under the habitual influence of worldly fear. When our Lord was at length apprehended and condemned to be crucified; Nicodemus ſeems to have been ſilent. We may be aſſured that he did not give his conſent to the deed. We may be aſſured that he abhorred it. But the Scriptures furniſh no foundation for believing that he confeſſed his Saviour in the hour of his diſtreſs; or even that he ſtood forward to give his voice againſt the ſhedding of innocent blood. Soon however we ſhall contemplate him with emotions very different from thoſe, which his paſt conduct has excited. But let

(c) John, vii. 51.

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us in the mean time turn our attention to a perſon of a kindred character, Joſeph of Arimathea. He alſo had been a diſciple of Jeſus; and, like Nicodemus, *ſecretly, for fear of the Jews.* He, like Nicodemus, was a man of eminence, *a rich man, and a counſellor;* and, like Nicodemus, had not dared to encounter for conſcience-ſake the contempt and indignation of the people. But being *a juſt and good man;* holding flagrant crimes in deteſtation, and ſincere in his deſires not to violate his duty as a religious man, much as he had hitherto failed as to the courageous performance of it; he would have no ſhare in the perpetration of a legal murder. He *had not conſented to the counſel and deed* of the Jewiſh rulers; contenting himſelf, as appears probable, like Nicodemus, with teſtifying his diſapprobation of their proceedings by abſenting himſelf from their aſſembly. Now behold the ſanctifying and ſtrengthening power of divine grace! This man, on the evening of the day on which our Saviour died, went unto Pilate; went *boldly*, ſaith one of the evangeliſts (*d*), to mark the difference between his former cowardice and the religious fortitude with which he was now inſpired; this man went in boldly to Pilate, and requeſted the body of Jeſus. He who had himſelf waited

(*d*) Mark, xv. 43.

for the kingdom of God; in full expectation that it was about to be eſtabliſhed, and in decided aſſurance that Jeſus was the long-predicted King and Redeemer of Iſrael; he who, with this expectation, with this aſſurance, had never dared, while that King and Redeemer was alive, to confeſs his authority and confide in his protection: Now, when all his apoſtles had forſaken him and fled; when the multitudes who had ſo lately rent the air with hoſannas to the Son of David, had ſucceſsfully clamoured for his crucifixion; when to human eyes his claims were diſproved, his promiſes were falſified, and all the hopes of his kingdom extinguiſhed, by his death; when he had died as a malefactor, as a criminal accuſed and convicted of treaſon againſt Cæſar; when, to ſhew reverence to his memory, or even to mention his name with reſpect, would be a circumſtance ſufficient to ſubject any man to the ſuſpicion of being an accomplice in the guilt imputed to the King of the Jews: this man, in the face of Jeruſalem, went in boldly unto the Roman governor, and requeſted the body of Jeſus, that he might bury it in the moſt honourable manner, and in the ſepulchre which he had prepared for himſelf. In the diſcharge of theſe laſt offices, on his part perhaps the firſt offices, of pious and undiſguiſed

guiſed veneration to his Lord; he had a companion. And whom? Nicodemus! Nicodemus had reſembled Joſeph in timidity; and now partook of his boldneſs. Diſregarding all ſurmiſes, armed againſt all conſequences; he came *and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. Then took they the body of Jeſus, and wound it in linen clothes, with the ſpices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury* (*e*). Whence was this fortitude? Did it belong to Joſeph and Nicodemus by nature? Their antecedent conduct has anſwered the queſtion. It was the work of the Spirit of God; the fruit of ſtrengthening grace. The Spirit of grace, which ſtrengthened Joſeph and Nicodemus is ready to ſtrengthen you.

Do you deſire another example? Look to the apoſtle Peter. You know his ſhameful fall. You know his denial of his Lord: a denial deliberate, thrice repeated, confirmed by oaths and execrations. When reſtored by his forgiving maſter to the rank of an apoſtle; he was forewarned of *the death by which he ſhould glorify God* (*f*). Did he now diſplay a dread of danger? Did he now ſhrink from ſuffering? Did the full proſpect of death now move him? The prayer which his Lord had

(*e*) John, xix. 39, 40. (*f*) John, xxi. 18, 19

offered

offered for him had prevailed. *His faith failed not. Converted himself, he ſtrengthened his brethren* (*g*). He became the rock on which Chriſt laid the foundation of his church, both among the Jews and among the Gentiles. He was entruſted with the keys of the ſheepfold of Chriſt; and opened the door of admiſſion to both diviſions of the flock (*h*). And though, on one ſubſequent occaſion, he was enſnared by ſome ſlight remains of natural timidity into an undue compliance with the prejudices of the Jews; and received on that account the merited rebuke from St. Paul (*i*), whom he afterwards names with a warmth of affection probably encreaſed by the recollection of this very event (*k*): he perſevered with holy fortitude in his Chriſtian courſe, until it conducted him to that croſs, on which his maſter had foretold that he ſhould ſeal his teſtimony with his blood. Thus effectual was the interceſſion of Chriſt. Thus all-ſufficient was his grace. Chriſt now intercedes before the throne of God for you. To you he offers the all-ſufficient influence of his Spirit. *Having therefore an high prieſt, which can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities;*

(*g*) Luke, xxii. 32. (*h*) Compare Matt. xvi. 18, 19, with Acts, ii. 14—41. and x. 1—48. (*i*) Gal. ii. 11—14. (*k*) 2 Pet. iii. 15.

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an high Prieſt who was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without ſin: let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need (*l*).

But theſe, you remark, are primeval examples, exhibited in the days of the apoſtles. You would derive greater comfort from inſtances drawn from modern times and ordinary men. Take an inſtance then from the annals of your own country. Look to the character and conduct of Cranmer. In the general current of his proceedings, during the reign of Henry the Eighth, you behold a ſtruggle between a mind intent on a conſcientious adherence to duty, and a diſpoſition naturally characteriſed by timidity. You behold him at one time ſtrengthening himſelf with ſuccour ſought from above; and ſteadily purſuing his Chriſtian purpoſes, regardleſs of the reſentment of a furious and ungovernable monarch: at another, the victim of inherent weakneſs, tamely ſubſervient to his maſter's will, overawed into culpable compliances. When danger, after the acceſſion of Mary, muſtered its terrors; Cranmer ſunk in the conflict. Left to himſelf, in the hour of temptation he fell away. He re-

(*l*) Heb. iv. 15, 16.

nounced

nounced his faith! Again he looked to the grace of Chriſt, and he found it all-ſufficient. Behold him chained to the ſtake, as the wind diſperſes at intervals the volumes of fire and ſmoke in which he is enveloped. Behold his undaunted demeanour: his face, full of peace and joy in the Holy Ghoſt, as it were the face of an angel. Behold him ſtretching forth into the flames the hand which had ſigned the recantation; and ſurveying with a ſtedfaſt eye the fleſh waſting from the ſinews, bone dropping away from bone. Hear him exclaiming with exulting fervor; "This "hand offended: this hand ſhall ſuffer, this "unworthy hand." Contemplate this ſpectacle; this inſenſibility to pain, this ſacred fortitude, this ſubſtantial repentance, this complete ſubjugation of nature and its beſetting ſin: and ſay whether this is not the triumph of grace, whether this is not the finger of God.

2. The grace of Chriſt is ſufficient to enable his ſervants to perform efficaciouſly unto his glory the undertakings with which he entruſts them.

This is the word of the Lord: Not by might, nor by power; but by my Spirit, ſaith the Lord of hoſts. Without me, ſaith our Saviour, *ye can*

can do nothing. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit (*m*). Look to the diſplay which the Scriptures ſpread before you of the perfections of God; and you will immediately be convinced, that ſuch a Being will in no inſtance require from his creatures any one act of obedience, which they are not thoroughly enabled to perform: and that no inſtance of ſervice, however difficult, can be required from the weakeſt of his creatures, to which he cannot render that weakeſt of his creatures equal. Look to the examples which the ſacred writings exhibit of the efficacy of divine grace, in ſtrengthening holy men of old to execute every undertaking, to which God, for the manifeſtation of his glory, was pleaſed to call them: and your conſcience will proclaim to you that if, at any hour, and under any circumſtances, you fail to diſcharge the duties, trying as they may be, of the ſituation in which the Lord who appointeth your lot ſhall have placed you; it is not becauſe the grace of Chriſt is not all-ſufficient: it is becauſe you aſk it not, or aſk it amiſs. When Moſes was commanded to return after an abſence of forty years into Egypt, and to declare his commiſſion to the king and to the Iſraelites; his

(*m*) Zeck. iv. 6. John, xv. 5. 8.

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feebleneſs and his infirmities overwhelmed him with deſpondence. *Who am I*, he replied, *that I ſhould go unto Pharaoh; and that I ſhould bring the children of Iſrael out of Egypt? O my Lord! I am not eloquent: I am ſlow of ſpeech and of a ſlow tongue. Behold! I am of uncircumciſed lips; and how ſhall Pharaoh hearken unto me? The children of Iſrael will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice.* What was the reply of the Almighty? *Certainly, I will be with thee. Who hath made man's mouth: or who maketh the dumb, or the deaf, or the ſeeing, or the blind? Have not I, the Lord? I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou ſhalt ſay. See, I have made thee a God unto Pharaoh. The children of Iſrael ſhall hearken unto thy voice* (*n*). Were not theſe promiſes fulfilled to the uttermoſt? Was not God with Moſes? Did not Pharaoh tremble at his preſence? Did not the Iſraelites believe him? Were they not delivered from Egyptian bondage by his hand? Additional teſtimonies crowd upon you. Look to the example of the apoſtle, whoſe words we are applying to our edification. Look to the ſupport which he received from divine grace under that very thorn in the fleſh, to which they allude. Hear his own expreſ-

(*n*) Exod. iii. 11, 12. 18. iv. 1. 10—12. vi. 30. vii. 1.

ſions

ſions in the verſes immediately ſubſequent to the text. *I take pleaſure in infirmities for Chriſt's ſake: for when I am weak, then am I ſtrong. In nothing am I behind the very chiefeſt apoſtles, though I be nothing. Truly the ſigns of an apoſtle were wrought among you in all patience, in ſigns, and wonders, and mighty deeds* (*o*). Hear his language on the ſame ſubject to the Galatians. *My temptation which was in my fleſh ye deſpiſed not nor rejected: but received me as an angel of God, even as Chriſt Jeſus. I bear you record that, if it had been poſſible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes and have given them unto me* (*p*). Did not the grace of Chriſt here prove itſelf all-ſufficient? Did it not prove itſelf all-ſufficient, when it enabled the apoſtles, twelve obſcure and helpleſs individuals, deſtitute of human attainments, of human ſtrength, ſo ſucceſsfully to preach Chriſtianity, a religion equally odious to the Jews and to the Gentiles; that, in the face of univerſal oppoſition, it ſpeedily numbered thouſands and tens of thouſands under its banners in almoſt every region of the known world? Did it not prove itſelf all-ſufficient, when it enabled the ſeed of the goſpel, though planted in a barren and degenerated ſoil; though to

(*o*) 2 Cor. xii. 10—12. (*p*) Gal. iv. 14, 15.

appear-

appearance inconſiderable *as a grain of muſtard ſeed, the ſmalleſt of all herbs;* ſo ſpeedily to bring forth to millions the peaceable fruits of righteouſneſs: ſo ſpeedily to aſſume the form of that mighty tree, whoſe branches ſhall overſpread the earth? *Ye know in all your hearts, and in all your ſouls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God ſpake concerning you. All are come to paſs unto you: and not one thing hath failed thereof* (*q*). Judge from the paſt to the future. Know that He, who has hitherto proved himſelf true, will prove himſelf a God of truth for ever. He offers his grace for your acceptance. He pronounces his grace all-ſufficient. Be aſſured that, *whatſoever ye do,* his grace is ready to enable you to *do it to the glory of God, that God may in all things be glorified through Jeſus Chriſt* (*r*).

3. The grace of Chriſt is ſufficient to give comfort under afflictions, and to convert them into means of improvement in faith and holineſs.

Whom the Lord loveth, he chaſteneth; and ſcourgeth every ſon whom he receiveth. It is good for me that I have been afflicted. Before I was afflicted I went aſtray; but now have I

(*q*) Joſhua, xxiii. 14. (*r*) 1 Cor. x. 31. 1 Pet. iv. 11.

kept thy word. Tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience; and experience hope. Nevertheleſs, God comforteth thoſe that are caſt down (*s*). By whom? By the Holy Ghoſt, the Comforter. Did not God abundantly comfort in ancient days that pattern of affliction, Job? Did not *the Lord accept Job, and give unto Job twice as much as he had before?* Did not he ſanctify the afflictions of Job to the welfare of his ſoul; teaching him by ſalutary diſcipline to abhor himſelf, and to repent in duſt and aſhes? And does not the language of St. Paul, in the bittereſt ſeaſon of his ſorrows, demonſtrate that he welcomed affliction as a bleſſing ſent from a wiſe and merciful Father; that he rejoiced in it as an inſtrument of growth in grace? Hear him addreſſing the elders of Epheſus: *Now, behold, I go bound in the ſpirit unto Jeruſalem; not knowing the things that ſhall befall me there: ſave that the Holy Ghoſt witneſſeth in every city, ſaying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of theſe things move me: neither count I my life dear unto myſelf; ſo that I might finiſh my courſe with joy, and the miniſtry which I have received of the Lord Jeſus.* *Nay*, as he adds on other occaſions, *in all*

(*s*) Hebr. xii. 6. Pſalm cxix. 67. 71. Rom. v. 3, 4. 2 Cor. vii. 6.

theſe things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. I am filled with comfort; I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation. Bleſſed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation. For, as the ſufferings of Chriſt abound in us, ſo our conſolation alſo aboundeth by Chriſt (*t*). Are not here the fruits of all-ſufficient grace? Sanctify then, in all your ſufferings, the Lord God in your hearts. By prayer, by patience, by ſelf-examination, by unremitting endeavours to correct and amend in yourſelf whatever offendeth the eyes of your heavenly Father, ſtrive to forward his gracious purpoſe. So ſhall the peace of God which paſſeth knowledge be poured by the Holy Ghoſt the Comforter into your heart. So ſhall your light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!

4. The grace of Chriſt is ſufficient for ſalvation.

It is *the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Chriſt Jeſus.* It is *the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are*

(*t*) Acts, xx. 22—24. Rom. viii. 37. 2 Cor. i. 3—5. vii. 4.

ſealed

ſealed unto the day of redemption (*u*). St. Paul felt the ſufficiency of divine grace unto ſalvation, when he exclaimed, on the proſpect of approaching martyrdom: *I know whom I have believed, and am perſuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him. I have fought a good fight; I have finiſhed my courſe; I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteouſneſs; which the Lord, the righteous judge, ſhall give me at that day* (*w*). He that endureth unto the end ſhall be ſaved: and the grace of Chriſt whereby you may be enabled to endure unto the end, is effectually placed within the reach of every man. Of the numbers of thoſe who ſhall ſtretch forth their arms and embrace it, and hold it ſtedfaſtly unto ſalvation, we know little. That is a ſecret placed beyond the veil, which ſeparates time from eternity. Yet have the ſkirts of that veil been ſo far lifted up by the hand of prophecy, as to cheer our preſent darkneſs with glimpſes of the more than mortal light which glows behind. *The earth ſhall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the ſea. The kingdoms of this world ſhall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Chriſt: and he ſhall reign for*

(*u*) 1 Pet. v. 10. Epheſ. iv. 30. (*w*) 2 Tim. i. 12. iv. 7, 8.

ever and ever. Many ſhall come from the Eaſt, and from the Weſt, and from the North, and from the South; and ſhall ſit down with Abraham, and Iſaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven (*x*). That you may form ſome eſtimation of the countleſs myriads of the redeemed ſaints, the inheritors of everlaſting life; contemplate the *armies of heaven*, repreſented as attendants on the triumphs of the Son of God in the emblematical viſions of the Apocalypſe: *a great multitude which no man could number of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, ſtanding before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and with palms in their hands; and crying with a voice as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, Salvation to our God and to the Lamb! Allelujah! For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth* (*y*). Here behold the ſufficiency of the grace of Chriſt unto ſalvation! How were all theſe countleſs myriads ſaved? Not an individual of the number was ſaved but by the grace of Chriſt. Do you rejoice in the contemplation of the innumerable hoſts of the bleſſed? Rejoice with trembling. Innumerable as they are, the earth, from the generations

(*x*) Iſaiah, xi. 9. Habbak. ii. 14. Rev. xi. 15. Matth. viii. 11. Luke, xiii. 28, 29. (*y*) Rev. vii. 9. xix. 6. 14.

which

which ſhe has hitherto nouriſhed in her boſom; from that which ſhe now nouriſhes; from thoſe which in due ſucceſſion ſhe ſhall nouriſh, before the dawning of the great day of the Lord; can ſupply theſe and yet larger multitudes to be inhabitants of heaven, without including you. She can ſupply theſe and yet larger multitudes to the regions of bliſs eternal; and ſtill may behold from among her children multitudes equally exceeding the power of computation conſigned to miſery everlaſting. In which of theſe multitudes ſhall you be found? One fact is incontrovertible. *No unclean perſon, nor covetous man, nor any man who is a murderer, or a thief, or a liar, or a drunkard, or a reviler, or an extortioner, or a reveller, or ſeditious, or guilty of hereſy, or of variance, or of hatred, or of ſtrife, or of emulations, or of envyings,* or *of* any *ſuch* crimes, of any other habitual ſin, *ſhall inherit the kingdom of God* (z). If you live as one of *the unrighteous*; if you *fulfil the works of the fleſh*; if you ſubject yourſelf to the dominion of any unchriſtian temper or practice; you will *have no inheritance in the kingdom of Chriſt and of God.* But the grace of Chriſt, which has already proved it-

(z) Eph. v. 5. 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. Gal. v. 19—21. Rev. xxi. 8. xxii. 15.

ſelf ſufficient to the ſalvation of millions of your fellow-ſinners, is ſufficient, if you will ſeek for it and profit by it, for yours. Then will it qualify you to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit; and to prove that you are Chriſt's, by crucifying the fleſh with its affections and luſts. Then ſhall it ſanctify you unto the day of redemption; unto that day when you ſhall join in the triumphant ſong of the *ten thouſand times ten thouſands and thouſands of thouſands* of the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect: *Bleſſing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto him that ſitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever! For thou waſt ſlain; and haſt redeemed us to God by thy blood* (*a*).

Let me now endeavour to apply to two claſſes of perſons of oppoſite deſcriptions, ſome portion of the inſtruction, which the general ſubject of the preſent and of the two preceding diſcourſes may ſuggeſt.

I. I would in the firſt place addreſs myſelf to thoſe perſons, who have hitherto neglected or deſpiſed the grace of God.

Are your eyes open to your ſituation? What is the object which you neglect or deſpiſe? Is it an object of no importance? Is

(*a*) Rev. v. 9. 11. 13.

it

it an object of little moment? Is it an object of temporary concern? It is the grace of God indiſpenſably neceſſary, by your own confeſſion indiſpenſably neceſſary, to everlaſting ſalvation. It is an object ſo pre-eminent in magnitude and in duration, that every other object which can intereſt the heart of man is in compariſon but the weight of a grain of duſt, the occupation of a moment. This grace of God you neglect or deſpiſe.

That you ſhould diſregard the acquiſition of a bleſſing thus inconceivably great without reaſons of the ſtrongeſt nature, would be madneſs almoſt beyond credibility. Perhaps then you regard the attainment of it as hopeleſs. Perhaps you have diſcovered in the charter of grace ſome clauſe of exception, which ſingles you out from the reſt of your ſpecies; ſevers and fixes you apart from the objects of mercy; and debars you from the poſſibility of receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, by which you may be ſanctified unto life eternal! You do not plead this apology. You confeſs that your heavenly Father has ever treated you, and ſtill treats you, as one of his children: that the offer of divine grace is univerſal: that to you is the word of this ſalvation ſent: that to you it has been given to hear the invitation, and to underſtand the

promiſe, of the Holy Spirit: that, whatever may have been the cauſes which have prevented you from obeying the call and accepting the boon, want of power has not been of the number.

But perhaps you imagine that efforts on your part are to have no ſhare in the attainment of the grace of Chriſt: that your exertions would be either preſumptuous, or uſeleſs, or needleſs: that it is your duty to wait in patient inactivity unto the time when it may pleaſe God, who worketh all in all, to vouchſafe to you the gift of his Holy Spirit. Your countenances ſhew that theſe are not your thoughts. Your countenances confeſs that, although it be God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleaſure; you feel yourſelves no leſs efficaciouſly free and moral agents in the acquiſition of divine grace than you are in the acquiſition of any of the gifts of God which you are to collect from the boſom of the earth. You confeſs that Jeſus Chriſt, who commands his grace to be ſought by the uſe of means; has not left you either ignorant of the means, or incapable of employing them. You confeſs that prayer, animated by ſuitable diſpoſitions and urged with due perſeverance, is a neceſſary and certain inſtrument

inſtrument by which the influence of the Holy Spirit is to be drawn down from heaven: and that a reverent and edifying application of grace already received is an indiſpenſable condition, not of its encreaſe only, but of its continuance.

Perhaps then you may be doubtful, for there is ſcarcely any meaſure of ſelf-deception too large to find admiſſion into the human heart, whether you may not already be under the effectual guidance of the Spirit of God. You may be of opinion that there are not any unequivocal marks, by which his preſence may be aſcertained; nor any tokens, which are infallible indications of his abſence. I perceive that I have again failed to ſpecify the cauſes of your diſregard. What is the language of thoſe downcaſt looks, but an acknowledgement that the ſplendor of noon and the blackneſs of midnight are not removed, each from the other, by a diſtance more wide, by characters more ſtriking, than thoſe which ſeparate and diſcriminate the works of the fleſh from the fruits of the Spirit? What is their language but an acknowledgement that you detect within your boſom proofs too plain to be controverted that it is the habitation of worldly luſts, not the Temple

ple of the Holy Ghoſt; that you have not the Spirit of Chriſt, and are therefore none of his?'

It is poſſible, however, that you may diſtruſt the ſufficiency of the grace of Chriſt. You may have become perſuaded, that to a being by nature ſo unholy, by tranſgreſſion ſo depraved, as yourſelf; to ſuch a being encompaſſed by the ſnares, and aſſailed by the malignity, of the powers of darkneſs, the divine aſſiſtance is granted in vain. I ſee that you ſtart back from this ſuppoſition. You "believe in the Holy Ghoſt, the Lord and "Giver of life." You believe in the omnipotence of God. You do not exalt Satan to the ſovereignty of the univerſe. You are convinced that he whom God bleſſeth is bleſſed; that he whom God aſſiſteth muſt be victorious: that he who taketh to himſelf the whole armour of God, the breaſt-plate of righteouſneſs, the ſhield of faith, the ſword of the Spirit, will be able to withſtand all the wiles of the devil, to quench all his fiery darts, and to lay hold in the ſtrength of divine grace on the crown of everlaſting ſalvation. What then am I to conclude? For what cauſe diſregardeſt or deſpiſeſt thou the riches of the grace of Chriſt? If thou art unable or unwilling to anſwer the queſtion; I read the true

reply in the word of God: *After thy hardneſs and impenitent heart thou treaſureſt up unto thyſelf wrath againſt the day of wrath.* Thy neglect, thy contempt, of divine grace ſprings from hardneſs of heart, from ſtubborn reluctance to repent. Hence thou art inſenſible to danger, careleſs as to conſequences. *The God of this world has blinded thy mind.* In the centre of the fulneſs of the light of the goſpel, thou haſt hitherto lived in wilful darkneſs. Surrounded with all the bleſſings of Chriſtian inſtruction, all the benefits and encouragements of Chriſtian communion; thou haſt hitherto diſplayed the ignorance or the indifference of a heathen. Stationed on the verge of a boundleſs eternity, into which thou muſt ſhortly paſs; elevated on an eminence, whence thou mayeſt behold the regions of everlaſting bliſs, and the abodes of never-ending woe; thou haſt conducted thyſelf as though the proſpect were an airy viſion, as though death were a perpetual ſleep. Year after year the Spirit of God has ſtretched forth his hand to pluck thee as a brand out of the burning; but thine hand thou haſt obſtinately withdrawn. His hand is ſtretched out ſtill. Doſt thou ſtill withdraw thine? Repentance is not yet too late even for thee. Doſt thou ſtill refuſe the grace of repentance? From the

throne

throne of heaven God calls thee to himſelf. To-day, if thou wilt hear his voice, harden not thy heart. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghoſt invite thee to pardon, redemption, ſanctification. They invite thee to ſalvation: they pledge the promiſe of the unchangeable Godhead to give thee ſtrength, if even yet thou wilt accept ſtrength, to attain ſalvation. To prefer perdition is within thy choice. Doſt thou chooſe hell or heaven?

2. To thoſe among you who have laboured to obtain the grace of Chriſt, and to apply to its proper object the ſtrength which is granted from above, meditations on the nature and the efficacy of the promiſed gift of the Spirit of God are perhaps not leſs important than to the careleſs or the hardened ſinner. You may not need, like the careleſs and the hardened, continually to be reminded that the guidance and ſupport of the Holy Ghoſt, purchaſed by the atoning ſacrifice of the Lord Jeſus, are eſſential to ſalvation, are freely offered to all men, are placed within the graſp of every man: for you have ſought them, you ſtill ſeek them, as neceſſary to you, as propoſed to you, as attainable by you. You may not equally with the inconſiderate and the ſcorner require to be admoniſhed that divine grace is

to be drawn down by prayer; to be diſcerned by its fruits; to be cheriſhed as all-ſufficient: for to prayer you have truſted for the acquiſition of it; its fruits are, in a meaſure more or leſs ample, viſible in your lives; its ſufficiency to preſent peace and final ſalvation is the ſheet-anchor of your ſouls. But are not you the children of Adam? Are not you compaſſed with infirmity? Are not you aſſailed, day after day, by inherent corruption? Are not you perpetually under the eye of that adverſary, who goeth about like a roaring lion ſeeking whom he may devour? Do not omiſſions of known duty, do not tranſgreſſions of acknowledged commandments, unceaſingly ariſe before your conſcience; covering you with ſhame, teaching you that of yourſelf you are nothing, conſtraining you to admire the long-ſuffering of God? Do not you read in the word of truth: *When the righteous turneth away from his righteouſneſs, and committeth iniquity; in his ſin that he hath ſinned he ſhall die* (*b*)? Do not you hear the voice of your Lord: *The branch cannot bear fruit except it abide in the vine: no more can ye, except ye abide in me. If a man abide not in me, he is caſt forth as a branch that is withered;* as a

(*b*) Ezek. xviii. 24. See alſo 26; and xxxiii. 12, 13. 18.

branch

branch that is to be *caſt into the fire* (*c*)? What is the concluſion to be deduced from theſe paſſages? A concluſion ſupported by many poſitive texts no leſs than by the decided tenor of holy writ; that grace received may be loſt: that grace abuſed will be withdrawn: that a man may fall from grace: that the moſt righteous man may plunge himſelf into everlaſting damnation. Is thy *name* written *in the book of life?* Be it ſo. Beware leſt it be *blotted out* (*d*). *Be not high-minded therefore, but fear. Behold* with aſtoniſhment and gratitude *the goodneſs of God* in making thee a partaker of his grace: *towards thee, goodneſs.* Goodneſs that ſhall enſure to thee ſalvation? On one condition—*if thou continue in his goodneſs: otherwiſe, thou alſo ſhalt be cut off* (*e*).

Grieve not then the Holy Spirit of God, ye who at preſent ſtand faſt in grace: provoke not your Saviour to take his holy Spirit from you. Abide in your Lord; and he will abide in you. Continue branches of the true vine; and you ſhall receive abundant nurture. Perſevere in prayer: flee from temptation: abſtain from all appearance of evil. Examine your life and converſation by the ſtan-

(*c*) John, xv. 4. 6. (*d*) Rev. iii. 5. (*e*) Rom. xi. 20. 22.

dard

dard of the goſpel. Probe your heart to the bottom. Compare yourſelf with yourſelf. Learn whether you *grow in grace;* whether you make a viſible advance, a regular progreſs, in the courſe of Chriſtian attainments. If you find yourſelf now on the ſame ſpot, at which you had long ſince arrived; where in the mean time has been your exertion? Where has been your ſolicitude? Where your remembrance of God? Where your love for your Redeemer? Where your reverence for the Spirit of ſanctification? However fair may be the bloſſom, however promiſing the early fruit: if that fruit, unreſponſive to ſhowers and dews and ſummer-ſuns, advance not towards maturity; it proves itſelf to be the production of a withering branch, a branch in danger of being cut off and caſt into the fire. But if it be indeed undeniable that you have ceaſed to preſs forward towards the mark of your high calling in Chriſt Jeſus: do you flatter yourſelf with the hope that you have remained ſtationary? On the abrupt and ſlippery aſcent, which leads from earth to heaven, do you hope that, while you have remitted your exertions to climb the ſteep, you have preſerved yourſelf from ſliding backward? The loſs of the fruits of many former, many laborious

rious efforts, is, I fear, only one among the deprivations and diſadvantages which you have to deplore. You have returned towards the world which you had forſaken. You have habituated yourſelf to ſloth and unconcern. You have ſupplied encouragement to your ſpiritual enemies. You have manifeſted indifference towards the Spirit of grace. *Be watchful* then, *and ſtrengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die. Remember how thou haſt received, and heard: and hold faſt, and repent. Remember from whence thou art fallen; and repent, and do thy firſt works: and I will not blot out thy name*, ſaith thy Lord, *out of the book of life* (*f*).

(*f*) Rev. ii. 5. iii. 2, 3. 5.

1807

SERMON VI.

On the Marks which diſtinguiſh a real Chriſtian.

GAL. v. 24.

They that are Chriſt's have crucified the fleſh with the affections and luſts.

UNCERTAINTY is the characteriſtic of earthly purſuits. All is vague, ambiguous, inſecure, tranſitory, unſatisfactory. The ſower knows not whether harveſt will reward his labours. The merchant cannot pronounce whether his veſſel will return with the expected cargo. The mariner, gazing on the blue vapours of the horizon, doubts whether the object to which he directs his courſe be a mountain or a cloud. *Man walketh in a vain ſhadow; and diſquieteth himſelf in vain.*

Not ſo with reſpect to the concerns of eternity. There every thing is determinate and immutable. Heaven and hell ſtand revealed before man. The rewards provided for the ſervants of Chriſt, the puniſhments in ſtore for thoſe who diſregard his offers of mercy, are eſtabliſhed for everlaſting in the word of truth; are ſo clearly diſplayed, that he who runneth may read and underſtand. Their voice is gone out into all lands; and their ſound unto the ends of the world. Is additional illumination needed? The goſpel ſupplies it. To enlighten the blind, to ſhame the ſelf-deceiver; to cheer the righteous on his way; to awe the guilty into contrition; the faithful and the wicked are diſcriminated by marks, which ignorance cannot miſtake nor craftineſs elude.

In various paſſages of Scripture thoſe perſons in all countries to whom the Chriſtian religion has been preached, for at preſent it is unneceſſary to ſpeak of heathen nations, are divided into two claſſes: into thoſe that are Chriſt's, and thoſe that are not Chriſt's. Theſe two bodies of men are alſo delineated under other repreſentations, which bear the ſame import with the preceding deſcription. Thus thoſe that are Chriſt's are occa-

occaſionally characteriſed as born of the Spirit; walking in the Spirit; the children of God; the elect of God; the doers of the law; the heirs of the kingdom of heaven. Thoſe that are not Chriſt's are deſcribed as walking in the fleſh; fulfilling the luſts of the fleſh; the children of this world; the unfruitful hearers of the law; the ſervants of Satan; the heirs of damnation. All of us who are here aſſembled, belong to the one or to the other, of theſe two diviſions of the human race. We are Chriſt's; or we are not Chriſt's. If we are Chriſt's, and if through the bleſſed influence of the holy Spirit, which will aſſuredly attend earneſt prayers and zealous exertions on our own part, we continue Chriſt's unto the end; we ſhall be received after death into the kingdom of heaven, through the atoning blood of our Redeemer. If we are not Chriſt's, and remain in that ſituation till we die; we have to look, as the Scriptures unequivocally declare, for that place only, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is never quenched.

If this ſtatement be juſt; ſurely every perſon preſent, who has any ſerious concern for his ſoul, muſt feel how inexpreſſibly important it is to ſatisfy himſelf whether, in his

preſent ſtate of heart and life, he is Chriſt's, or not.

This is a queſtion which God expects you to anſwer, every one for himſelf. There is only one method by which you can learn a true anſwer to it. Some perſons enthuſiaſtically conceive that they can diſcern by certain inward ſenſations and impulſes, which they attribute to the immediate agency of the Holy Ghoſt upon their minds, that they are Chriſt's. Others are willing to conclude that they are Chriſt's, becauſe they have been baptized into his church attend public worſhip, and the ſacraments, with tolerable regularity; and lead, according to their own eſtimation and the general opinion of the world, decently good lives. Others perſuade themſelves that Chriſt will acknowledge them at laſt for his, becauſe he is very merciful; and becauſe, unholy as they have been, they are ſatisfied that ſurrounding multitudes have been as unholy as themſelves. All theſe modes of judging are fatal deluſions. What is the true method? *To the law and to the teſtimony.* Search the Scriptures. They contain ample deſcriptions of the perſons who are Chriſt's. If, on deeply examining your heart and conduct as in the preſence of God, you diſcover adequate

quate grounds for belief that thoſe deſcriptions may be applied to yourſelf; you have reaſon humbly to truſt that you are Chriſt's. If you perceive that they cannot fairly be applied to yourſelf; conclude that at preſent you are not Chriſt's.

Search then the Scriptures for the anſwer to your queſtion. Among the many paſſages relating to the ſubject, perhaps there is not one from which you may collect the true reply more eaſily than from the verſe immediately under our conſideration. *They that are Chriſt's have crucified the fleſh, with the affections and luſts.* And conſequently, they who have not crucified the fleſh with the affections and luſts, are not Chriſt's. Brethren, every one of you may judge of his own ſtate for himſelf.

The love of Chriſt, ſaith the apoſtle on another occaſion, *conſtraineth us: becauſe we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:* we judge that if Chriſt died for all men, it is a proof that but for his death all men would have fallen ſhort of pardon and eternal life: *and he died for all, that they which live, ſhould not henceforth live unto themſelves, but unto him who died for them and roſe again* (*a*). This living unto Chriſt he deno-

(*a*) 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

minates in the text crucifying the fleſh with the affections and luſts. *This I ſay, then*, as he writes in an earlier part of the chapter; *Walk in the Spirit, and ye ſhall not fulfil the luſts of the fleſh. For the fleſh luſteth againſt the Spirit, and the Spirit againſt the fleſh: and theſe are contrary the one to the other.* Having ſubjoined a copious catalogue of crimes, which he terms *the works of the fleſh;* the works to which our corrupt and fleſhly nature of itſelf would draw us; and concerning which he pronounces that they, who do ſuch things, ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God: he enumerates ſundry Chriſtian virtues as among the fruits of the Spirit; as contrary to our naturally ſinful diſpoſitions, and as created, nurtured, and ripened in us only by the influence of the Spirit of God: for it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do that which is right; and he worketh by the agency of the Holy Ghoſt. And in order to qualify every perſon to examine and judge for himſelf whether he is living to the Spirit and to Chriſt, and is therefore authoriſed to hope for mercy and ſalvation; or whether he is living to the fleſh, and is therefore ſtill lying in a ſtate of condemnation; St. Paul concludes with this ſhort and explicit rule: *They that*

are

are Chriſt's have crucified the fleſh with the affections and luſts.

Let me now endeavour to aſſiſt you in judging whether you are living to Chriſt, or to the fleſh, by ſetting before you ſome of the ſcriptural teſts, which diſtinguiſh from a corrupt and unregenerate world thoſe who belong to the Lord Jeſus.

I. To crucify the fleſh with its affections and luſts, is, in the firſt place, to make it the buſineſs of life to overcome, through the ever preſent grace of God, the evil diſpoſitions and deſires of human nature; and to abſtain from the evil actions to which thoſe diſpoſitions and deſires would lead. And on what principle are you thus to crucify the fleſh? You are to crucify it for the ſake of Jeſus Chriſt. You are to abhor and renounce ſin, becauſe it was the occaſion of his ſufferings. From love and gratitude to your Redeemer for the unſpeakable kindneſs which he has ſhewn towards yourſelf, you are to forſake whatever is diſpleaſing in his ſight. He died for you: and you are to live unto him. If you will not live unto him in this world, you will not be received into his kingdom in the next. Theſe are fundamental truths which

the Scriptures teach you plainly, and beforehand. You are here placed, in this reſpect, upon your trial; with your underſtandings previouſly informed, with your eyes open to inevitable conſequences. Conſider them well, each of you for yourſelf. Are you living to Chriſt? If you wilfully indulge yourſelf in any wicked principles, in any wicked habit; you certainly are not living unto him. If you are polluted with any impure practice; you are not living unto Chriſt, but unto the fleſh and the devil. If your heart ſwells with hatred, or contracts with envy; you are not living unto Chriſt. If you are proud; or covetous; or a drunkard; or a reveller: you are not living unto Chriſt. Caſt your eyes on ſome of the verſes preceding the text: and you will read, if your character be found among thoſe which I have ſpecified, an expreſs declaration concerning yourſelf, that you ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God. Deceive not yourſelf by irrelevant ſpeculations. Say not within your boſom; "If this be the "caſe, how few will be ſaved!" That is not your concern. The point which is important to you is this: that God has ſolemnly pronounced, that neither the unclean perſon,

nor

nor the envious, nor he who cheriſhes hatred or ſeeks for revenge, nor the drunkard, nor the ſlanderer, nor the proud, nor the contentious, nor the covetous, nor any man who will not labour ſtedfaſtly to live unto Chriſt, ſhall enter into the kingdom of Heaven. Will not you credit the word of your Judge? Do you charge the God of truth with falſehood? Hath he ſpoken and ſhall he not do it? Hath he ſaid it, and ſhall he not make it good? Beware leſt you be convinced when it is too late. If you are living in any habitual ſin; conſider yourſelf as a perſon ſtill lying under the curſe of the law, under the ſentence of condemnation. Attempt not to elude the denunciations of God by dangerous and groundleſs hopes that he will be merciful in caſes, with reſpect to which he has forewarned you, and has forewarned you in terms as plain as language can furniſh, that he will not ſhew mercy, but will allow his juſtice to purſue its courſe. Know that his threatenings will be fully executed againſt yourſelf; unleſs you ſubmit to thoſe means, and become inveſted with thoſe qualifications, through which alone mercy is held forth to you. O Lord our God! Thou art unſpeakably merciful; otherwiſe no man would ſee ſalvation.

ſalvation. From the cloud in which thou paſſedſt before Moſes, thou proclaimedſt thy name to be *merciful.* Thou proclaimedſt thyſelf, *The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-ſuffering, abundant in goodneſs and truth; keeping mercy; forgiving iniquity, tranſgreſſion and ſin.* But thou proclaimedſt thyſelf alſo to be a God *that will by no means clear the guilty* (*b*). Thou wilt not ſhew mercy in a way which would contradict thy own word. Thou wilt not ſhew mercy in a way which would miniſter encouragement to ſin. Thou wilt not ſhew mercy to thoſe who remain obſtinate in careleſſneſs and tranſgreſſion. Thou wilt ſhew abundant mercy to the repentant ſinner; none to the perſevering ſinner. My brethren! would you obtain mercy? Seek it in the way, the only way, in which it is to be obtained. Become conſcious of your need of mercy; conſcious of your guilt and of your helpleſſneſs. Fly to the atonement which Chriſt has made upon the croſs. Pray conſtantly and fervently for his grace: and under the influence of his grace make it your firſt care and your warmeſt deſire that your heart be purified, that it be turned from darkneſs to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. Renounce every ſinful tem-

(*b*) Exod. xxxiv. 5—7.

per,

per, every ſinful practice, however dear it may be to you. If to renounce it be a trial as difficult and painful as to part with a right hand or a right eye; you muſt either relinquiſh it, or relinquiſh your hopes of heaven. You muſt make your choice. Do you heſitate to come to a deciſion? Transform mountains into vallies, the ſea into dry land: remove the eaſt to the weſt: reconcile darkneſs with light: and then dream of enjoying guilty pleaſures in this life, and happineſs in the life to come.

II. Have you therefore reſolved, through the grace of God, to renounce the indulgence of ſinful inclinations and practices? Have you thus taken the firſt ſtep towards living unto Chriſt? What then is the ſecond? *Ceaſe to do evil:* ſaith the apoſtle. What is his next injunction? *Learn to do well.*

In addition to the crowds who abandon themſelves to flagrant immorality, there are numbers who paſs through life with ſo ſcanty a portion of active concern about religion; are ſo far from proving the care of their ſouls to be their main object; and fall ſo far ſhort in tempers and in practice of the ſcriptural rule of living unto Chriſt; that they muſt reaſonably expect, if they continue in their preſent ſtate, to fall ſhort of ſalvation.

In the world, which forms its judgement by its own ſtandard; not by the true ſtandard, the word of God; they ſupport what is termed, a very reſpectable character. They are, on the whole, punctual and honeſt in their dealings; grave and decent in their manners; not apt, under ordinary circumſtances, to uſe profane language, or to fly out into paſſions and quarrels; generally preſent, once at leaſt on the Sabbath, in the public worſhip of God; and attendants perhaps, more or leſs frequently, on the ſacramental table. Poſſibly you enquire, "Are not all theſe things right?" That is not exactly the queſtion which you ſhould propoſe. The true queſtion is; Suppoſing this conduct as far as it advances, to be right; is it ſufficient? Is it living unto Chriſt in ſuch a manner as the Scriptures declare to be neceſſary to ſalvation? Now, in ſuggeſting this enquiry, far be it from me to encourage any of you cenſoriouſly to pry into the character of others. But moſt earneſtly let me importune each of you thoroughly to examine his own; that he may diſcover whether it has been exhibited in the preceding picture. To the queſtion, then, whether the conduct which has been deſcribed be not right as far as it advances; the Scriptures reply, that it is right, if it has originated from right principles, from Chriſtian motives.

If

If you have been temperate only for the ſake of preſerving your health; if you have been decent in your converſation, grave in your deportment, honeſt and quiet in your dealings, and regular in preſenting yourſelves in the houſe or at the table of the Lord; only for the ſake of your reputation, or for ſome other ſelfiſh and worldly reaſon: there has been nothing in all theſe things of living unto Chriſt. But let us make a more favourable ſuppoſition. Be it admitted that your conduct has flowed in ſome degree from the love of Chriſt. I cannot ſuppoſe, if you belong to the claſs of which I now ſpeak, that it has flowed principally from the love of Chriſt. Had that been your principal motive; it would have given birth to far other fruits. But your conduct flowed, in part, from love to Chriſt. Poor and deficient indeed has been your love for the Lord Jeſus; if you have been ſatisfied with manifeſting it by ſuch feeble tokens. And poor and deficient is your knowledge of your Bible; if you think that you ſhew that love of Chriſt, which the Bible requires of every true Chriſtian! what ſaith the old Teſtament? *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy ſoul, and with all thy might* (*c*).

(*c*) Deut. vi 5.

What

What ſaith the New? *Ye are not to live unto yourſelves; but unto Chriſt who died for you. Whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God; that God may in all things be glorified through Chriſt Jeſus* (*d*). Interpret by theſe comprehenſive yet moſt perſpicuous explanations the import of the apoſtolical direction, *Learn to do well.* Behold what it is to keep the heart with all diligence! Behold what it is to be holy in all manner of converſation and godlineſs! Behold what it is to love your neighbour as yourſelf! Behold what it is to keep under your body, and bring it into ſubjection! Behold a taſk which demands fervent zeal, affectionate gratitude, unabating vigilance, unwearied exertion. At home and abroad to be actively employed in doing good; to viſit the fatherleſs and the widow in their affliction: to withſtand corrupting example, and keep ourſelves unſpotted from the world; to adorn day by day with encreaſing holineſs the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things; to let our light ſhine before men for the very purpoſe of leading them to glorify our Father who is in heaven; to labour to be holy becauſe our Lord is holy, pure becauſe he requireth purity, juſt and true and merciful be-

(*d*) 1 Cor. x. 31. 2 Cor. v. 15. 1 Pet. iv. 11.

cauſe

cauſe he loveth juſtice and truth and mercy; this it is to learn to do well, this it is to have the grace of God, this it is to live unto Chriſt, this it is to crucify the fleſh with the affections and luſts.

III. The characteriſtics which have hitherto been propoſed as teſts, by which you may be aſſiſted in forming a judgement whether at preſent you belong to Chriſt, have principally been deduced from your proceedings as to the government of unhallowed inclinations and deſires, and from your tempers and conduct as exerciſed towards man. Not that the frame of your heart towards God has been thrown into the back-ground. Love to God through Chriſt has been aſſumed as the baſis of ſelf-government, and of love to man. From that root muſt ſpring every ramification of duty. From that fountain of living waters every Chriſtian grace muſt derive never-ceaſing ſupplies. The diſpoſition, however, of your ſoul as to ſubjects more immediately and cloſely ſpiritual than thoſe which have been ſpecified is the leaſt dubitable of all the tokens, to which you can reſort for inſight into your actual ſtate. Place then before your eyes the divine plan of Salvation. Contemplate

template its nature. Behold it repreſenting itſelf as in every point a ſyſtem of free and unmerited mercy. Behold it caſting down the pride of man: extinguiſhing his vaunted pretenſions: exacting the unqualified renunciation of his imaginary righteouſneſs: ſummoning him to fall proſtrate as a condemned Criminal at the foot of the Croſs: and conſtraining him to exclaim in the anguiſh of conſcious guilt; "Lord! I look for deliverance "from everlaſting puniſhment, and for ad- "miſſion into thy eternal kingdom, ſolely "becauſe thou waſt ſlain that thou mighteſt "redeem me unto God by thy blood. Lord! "I look forward in hope of being enabled to "will and to do that which is well-pleaſing in "thy ſight, to conquer myſelf, to ſhun or to "repel the fiery darts of Satan, ſolely becauſe "thy grace is made perfect in weakneſs." Is this plan of ſalvation, thus humiliating to human arrogance, thus declaratory of man's utter debility and corruption, acceptable to you? Do you receive it not merely with acquieſcence, but with complacency, with delight? Is *Chriſt crucified*, to multitudes on the one hand *a ſtumbling-block*, to multitudes on the other, fooliſhneſs, to you *the Power of God, and the wiſdom of God* (*e*)? Are you cheer-

(*e*) 1 Cor. i. 23, 24.

fully willing to be abaſed; in order that Chriſt, in his character as Saviour, may be exalted? Are you cheerfully willing that your helpleſſneſs and your ſin ſhould ſtand fully revealed; in order that the ſtupendous mercies of your redemption and your ſanctification may wholly and completely redound to the glory of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghoſt?

Conſider likewiſe what is the frame of your ſoul with regard to communion with God, and meditation on things eternal. Does the current of your thoughts, when, unchecked by impediments, it ſelects a courſe for itſelf, flow towards God and your Redeemer? Is the hour of prayer a burden to you, or a comfort? In the hurry of buſineſs, in the intercourſe of ſociety, do you perceive your mind ſnatching opportunities of lifting itſelf up to heaven? Do you delight to contemplate the works of God, becauſe they are his works; and through his works, whether of nature or of Providence, to admire, to venerate, and to adore their author? Does the word of God, together with thoſe human writings which are calculated to inſtruct and aſſiſt you in the performance of his will, conſtitute that branch of ſtudy, to which your inclinations principally tend? Does your ſoul expand itſelf in

looking forward to the world unſeen; in anticipating the preſence of God and of Chriſt, the hymns of angelic hoſts, the wonders and the glories of eternity? Do you exult in the proſpect of thoſe new heavens and that *new earth*, becauſe it is a world *wherein dwelleth righteouſneſs* (*f*): becauſe ſin ſhall not be there: becauſe there ſhall no longer be temptation: becauſe it is through the predominance of univerſal holineſs that there ſhall be neither pain nor ſorrow nor death; but peace and joy and bliſs ſhall reign without meaſure, and without end? *As the hart panteth after the water-brooks; ſo panteth my ſoul after thee, O God. My ſoul thirſteth for God, for the living God. When ſhall I come and appear before God* (*g*)? Such are the aſpirations of the boſom, which is filled with the love of Chriſt!

IV. Direct your attention to the objects, which, when the affection of the apoſtle Paul for his converts expatiated in calling down bleſſings upon them, uniformly preſented themſelves to his thoughts. *I ceaſe not to make mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the Father of glory, may give unto you the ſpirit of wiſdom*

(*f*) 2 Pet. iii. 13. (*g*) Pſalm xlii. 1, 2.

and

and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your underſtanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the ſaints: that he would grant you according to the riches of his glory to be ſtrengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man: that Chriſt may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all ſaints what is the breadth and length and depth, and height, and to know the love of Chriſt which paſſeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulneſs of God. I pray that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgement: that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be ſincere and without offence till the day of Chriſt, being filled with the fruits of righteouſneſs, which are by Jeſus Chriſt unto the glory and praiſe of God. I deſire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wiſdom and ſpiritual underſtanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleaſing, being faithful in every good work, and increaſing in the knowledge of God; ſtrengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-ſuffering with joyfulneſs (*b*). Obſerve the completely ſpiri-

(*b*) Eph. i. 16—18. iii. 16—19. Philipp. i. 9 11. Col. i. 9—11.

tual nature of theſe ſupplications of the Apoſtle. *They that are after the fleſh do mind the things of the fleſh: but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit* (*i*). How truly conformable are the prayers to the deſcription! Here is no minding of earthly things: no requeſt making proviſion for the fleſh to fulfil the luſts thereof; no ſolicitude even for the natural demands and legitimate comforts of the body. Every thing marks a man whoſe converſation is in heaven; a man anxious that there alſo ſhould be the converſation of his diſciples. Every thing is pure, holy, heavenly; directed to the glory of God, and the ſalvation of men; raiſed above the concerns of the preſent world except as far as they have reference to another. When you mould your thoughts into wiſhes, when you pour out your ſoul in petitions, for bleſſings upon yourſelf, upon your child, upon any one whom you hold dear: what are thoſe bleſſings? Are they the bleſſings which St. Paul ſupplicated for his beloved converts? Do wiſhes and prayers for ſuch bleſſings crowd upon your mind; not like ceremonial attendants on a proceſſion, coldly preceding or coldly following that part of the train in which the object really intereſting is ſtationed;

(*i*) Rom. viii. 5.

not

not ranging themſelves as formal accompaniments on eager and animated deſires for learning, for reputation, for power, for advancement, for wealth: but prominent and fervid, as intent on bleſſings ſo ſatisfying the underſtanding, ſo pervading and occupying the heart, that no other acquiſition appears like unto them; no other acquiſition ſeems entitled even to a ſecond place; no other acquiſition, ſtationed by their ſide, merits any degree or ſhadow of compariſon? *To be ſpiritually-minded, is life and peace.* To be ſpiritually-minded is to belong to the Lord Jeſus.

Behold then in the teſts which have been placed before you criterions amply ſufficient to determine the queſtion, whether you are Chriſt's or not. However that queſtion be decided; *ſuffer, I beſeech you, the word of exhortation* (*k*).

1. If you are not Chriſt's, what are your hopes? Do you flatter yourſelf that the Scriptures may prove not to be the word of inſpiration? Or do you aſſume the promiſes of God as true, and regard his threatenings as empty terrors? Or do you imagine that when Chriſt from his throne of judgement conſigns to predicted puniſhment every other deſpiſer

(*k*) Heb. xiii. 22.

of his goſpel, he will ſelect you as an exception; that he will diſtinguiſh you by unexampled mercy, becauſe you have dared to make his known diſpoſition to mercy a plea to your conſcience for habitual rebellion againſt his laws? Behold the thin and hollow ice, on which you propoſe to croſs the gulph of everlaſting deſtruction! If you recoil from the proſpect, what are your purpoſes? Are you deſirous of ſalvation? Are you willing to be taught of God, to be delivered by him from the bondage of Satan, and tranſlated into the kingdom of his Son? Are you willing to receive the gift of Salvation as light after darkneſs, as life from the dead? Approach then with confidence the fountain of living waters; and take and drink of them freely. Approach to your Saviour, through whom alone can man have acceſs to the Father. *Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden; and I will give you reſt. Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wiſe caſt out.* To you is this invitation directed: to you is this promiſe addreſſed. But, if you would come unto Chriſt effectually; come unto him faithfully. Come unto him with a ſurrender of your whole heart. Think not that it will be ſufficient to abandon your groſſer defile-

ments.

ments. Think not that it is religion to paſs a tolerably decent life, diverſified with a regular ſprinkling of religious obſervances. Will the grace of Chriſt ſhare a divided empire? Will the grace of Chriſt vouchſafe to occupy thoſe out-ſkirts of the heart, which ſin is content to relinquiſh, in order that it may enjoy in tranquillity the favourite ſpots which it has fenced off for itſelf? Is this to become a new man? Is this to be born again of the Spirit? Is this to crucify the fleſh with the affections and luſts? Is this to be Chriſt's? Is this to offer your whole ſpirits, ſouls, and bodies, a living ſacrifice unto the Lord? *Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar. Ye have brought that which is torn, and the lame, and the ſick: thus ye have brought an offering. Should I accept this of your hand; ſaith the Lord? Offer it now to thy governor. Will he be pleaſed with thee, or accept thy perſon; ſaith the Lord of hoſts? Curſed be the deceiver, which ſacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing. For I am a great King, ſaith the Lord of hoſts: and my name is dreadful. I have no pleaſure in you, ſaith the Lord of hoſts: neither will I accept an offering at your hand* (*l*).

2. If you are already a true Chriſtian; foſter the good ſeed ſown in your heart, that the divine

(*l*) Malachi, i. 7, 8. 10. 13, 14.

planter may preſerve it from being overwhelmed by ſurrounding tares, and may nouriſh it unto timely and plentiful maturity. Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. Do you feel yourſelf diſpoſed to be ſatisfied with your preſent attainments? And is not ſuſpicion, is not alarm awakened in your boſom? With any perſon, whom you cordially love, you are day by day deſirous of cultivating a more and more endearing intercourſe, a more and more intimate connection. When your heart is warmly engaged in any purſuit; you grudge the time which you are not able to devote to that object: you are zealous and anxious in puſhing onward towards the attainment of it: you note with pleaſure every degree of approach towards it: you are filled with regret if you diſcover that during a period of ſome length you have not made any perceptible advances. Why is it not thus with your love to Chriſt? Why is it not thus with your purſuit of faith and holineſs? *Brethren*, ſaid St. Paul, *I count not myſelf to have apprehended ſalvation. But this one thing I do:* This is my great and unceaſing object: *forgetting thoſe things which are behind, and reaching forth unto thoſe things which are before, I preſs towards the mark for the*

the prize of the high calling of God in Chriſt Jeſus (*m*). Are you farther advanced than the apoſtle? Though he did not deem himſelf to have apprehended ſalvation; do you preſume that you are ſecure? If you diſclaim the arrogant deluſion; if, repreſenting yourſelf for a moment as a fellow-traveller with the apoſtle on the way that leadeth to life eternal, you behold him already at an immeaſurable diſtance before you: Why is it that you imitate not his humility, his ardour, his perſeverance? Why is it that, like unto him, you count not all things but loſs, that you may win Chriſt; if that by any means you may attain unto the reſurrection of the righteous (*n*)? The Holy Ghoſt, the Comforter, from whom alone, through the merits of the Lord Jeſus, every Chriſtian grace is to be derived, withdraws not his countenance from you, limits not his bounty towards you. Has he enabled you to bring forth fruit thirtyfold? He offers to enable you to bring forth ſixty and an hundred fold. *Aſk; and you ſhall receive.* What ſhall you aſk? Aſk that you may be enabled to *give all diligence, to add to your faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godlineſs;*

(*m*) Philipp. iii. 13, 14. (*n*) Philipp. iii. 8. 11.

and

and to godlineſs, brotherly kindneſs; and to brotherly kindneſs, charity. Aſk that you may *give diligence to make your calling and election ſure. For if you do theſe things you ſhall never fall. For ſo an entrance ſhall be miniſtered unto you abundantly into the everlaſting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt* (o).

(o) 2 Pet. i. 5—7. 10, 11.

SERMON VII.

On the Duty of openly ranging ourſelves on the Side of the Lord.

EXODUS, xxxii. 26.

Then Moſes ſtood in the Gate of the Camp, and ſaid: "Who is on the Lord's Side?"

AMONG the moſt evident tokens of the natural alienation of the human heart from righteouſneſs is the indiſpoſition of men to render unto God the ſame meaſure, which they render one to another. He, who in ſome few inſtances has found his friend deſerving of confidence, is prone to confide in him afterwards, and perhaps even to credulity. He, who has witneſſed examples of the power of a ſuperior, uſually aſcribes to him ſtill greater power. He, who has experi-

enced

enced eminent and unmerited acts of kindneſs, and returns not to his benefactor the tribute of gratitude and love; is ſtigmatiſed with univerſal cenſure. How different is our conduct towards Him, to whom we owe every thing! *A ſon honoureth his Father, and a ſervant his maſter. If then I be a father; where is my honour? And, if I be a maſter; where is my fear, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts* (*a*)? They who have received unremitting teſtimonies of the providential wiſdom of God, refuſe to entruſt themſelves to his guidance. They who are ſurrounded by the wonders of his omnipotence, diſregard his threatenings and his promiſes. They who are indebted to his ſpontaneous bounty for bleſſings incalculable in number and in amount, thank him not, nor obey him: and forfeit not the favourable eſtimation of the world.

In the unbelief, the contemptuous diſregard, the baſe and rebellious ingratitude, diſplayed by the children of Iſrael towards the Almighty Father of mercies who had reſcued them from Egypt, we imagine that we behold this natural alienation of the heart from God exemplified to an extent never to be rivalled. Inſtance after inſtance we read with aſtoniſhment. We forget that, *what-*

(*a*) Malachi, i. 6.

ſoever

ſoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning (*b*). We forget that all men are children of Adam; that the Creator hath made all nations of one blood; that human nature is in all men the ſame; that in every man in every age *the heart* is in its original propenſities *deceitful above all things and deſperately wicked* (*c*). When we contemplate the enormities of the choſen people; we contemplate the courſe which we ſhould ourſelves have been no leſs diſpoſed to purſue. The hiſtory of Iſrael is a mirror, which reflects our own likeneſs.

We learn, in the chapter from which the text is taken, that when Moſes, who had been ſummoned to the top of Sinai that he might receive ordinances and directions from God, had now continued during many days upon the mountain; the people of Iſrael became extremely impatient at his abſence. They aſſembled tumultuouſly around Aaron. They affirmed that, as for Moſes, they knew not what event had befallen him. And although they had ſo lately covenanted in the moſt ſolemn manner ſtedfaſtly to keep the ten commandments; yet in defiance of the ſecond commandment they inſiſted that Aaron ſhould mould for them a graven

(*b*) Rom xv. 4. (*c*) Jerem. xvii. 9.

image, a viſible emblem and repreſentation of the unſeen God, to be carried at the head of the hoſt. Aaron, fearing man more than the Lord, moſt wickedly gave way to their clamour and violence. He formed a golden calf, the image of an animal which he had been accuſtomed to ſee the object of worſhip in Egypt; built an altar before it; and proclaimed a feaſt in honour of Jehovah. Before that image the people bowed down in adoration; to that image they offered ſacrifices; to that image they aſcribed the glory of their deliverance from the land of bondage. This blind and daring idolatry of the Iſraelites God revealed to his ſervant who ſtood before him. Moſes, having prevailed with his heavenly maſter, by the kindeſt and moſt diſintereſted interceſſion, to forbear from deſtroying the rebellious nation inſtantly and utterly; haſtened down from the mountain. Arriving at the gate of the camp, and beholding the people occupied in idolatrous ſongs and dances and worſhip before the golden calf; he cried aloud, *Who is on the Lord's ſide? Let him come unto me.* All the ſons of Levi obeyed his voice. They gathered themſelves together unto him: they declared themſelves on the ſide of the Lord; and profeſſed their readineſs

readineſs to execute the commands of his choſen miniſter. They were called to a ſevere trial of obedience. They were required to take their ſwords in their hands; to paſs through the camp of Iſrael from one ſide to the other; and to ſlay every perſon, whether neighbour, companion, brother, or ſon, whom they ſhould find engaged in paying reverence to the idol. *The children of Levi did according to the word of Moſes: and there fell of the people that day about three thouſand men.*

In applying to our edification the portion of ſcriptural hiſtory which you have heard; I ſhall, in the firſt place, endeavour to convince you that, as Moſes called upon the faithful among the Iſraelites, ſo the goſpel calls upon us, to ſtand forth on the ſide of the Lord. And I ſhall afterwards lay before you ſome obſervations reſpecting the faithful diſcharge of this duty. Let us unite in earneſtly beſeeching the Giver of grace to open our minds, that they may underſtand and embrace the truth.

I. The people of Iſrael; the peculiar people of God; the people who had experienced ſuch extraordinary mercies at his hand; the

people who within leſs than forty days had beheld the terrors of his preſence on Mount Sinai, had heard the law from his mouth, and had pledged themſelves to ſincere and ſtedfaſt obedience; now diſregarded their promiſe, deſpiſed the unchangeable commandment, and were rioting in idolatrous feſtivities conſecrated to the honour of the golden calf. Profeſſing to be the votaries of Jehovah; for even this impious feaſt was named by Aaron a feaſt to the Lord; they were become the vaſſals of an idol. Forſaking the ordinances of the true God, that they might purſue their own devices; and, under the pretence of worſhipping him, polluting themſelves with thoſe very practices which he had recently pronounced to be abominations in his ſight: they clearly proved that, although they called themſelves his people, their hearts were alienated from him; that he was not the maſter whom they loved; that his will was not the law to which they were ſolicitous to conform. It was time then that a diſtinction ſhould be made between the faithful ſervants of God, if ſuch there were, and the unworthy multitudes who pretended to adore him. It was time for Moſes, the embaſſador of the Moſt High, to cry out in his name

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to all the people; *Who is on the Lord's ſide?* It was time that the Levites, who alone had not partaken in the general idolatry, or now at length were ſtruck with horror at their guilt, ſhould fly with precipitation to their great leader, who ſummoned them to the ſtandard of their God. Caſt your eyes upon the Chriſtian world: caſt your eyes upon this your native country, in which Chriſtianity is profeſſed in its pureſt form: caſt your eyes upon your own neighbourhood, upon the places where the prevalence or the deficiency of true religion is likely to be well known to you: and let your underſtandings and conſciences pronounce, whether a ſcene too nearly reſembling that which Moſes beheld in the camp of Iſrael be not preſented to your view. Through the enlightening grace of God, this Proteſtant land is no longer overſpread with worſhippers of graven or molten images. But are there not numbers among thoſe, who profeſs the Chriſtian faith; are there not numbers among thoſe, with whoſe conduct and principles the ordinary tranſactions of life render you acquainted; whoſe hearts are ſet upon their idols? The covetous man is declared in the Scriptures to be an idolater. Money is his god. How large a

portion of mankind is comprehended among the worſhippers of money! The Scriptures aver the glutton alſo to be an idolater. He worſhips the brutiſh appetite, by which he is enſlaved. On the ſame authority, the man whoſe chief object is any ſenſual pleaſure deſerves the ſame denomination. That pleaſure is his idol. He likewiſe whoſe chief purſuit is reputation, or honour, or power, is an idolater. Reputation, or honour, or power, is the object of his worſhip. In ſhort, he who ſets his heart on any worldly object, inſtead of fixing it upon God, is conſidered in the Scriptures, as partaking in the guilt of idolatry, as a ſlave to that object which he makes his principal purſuit, and as not on the ſide of the Lord. *Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourſelves ſervants to obey, his ſervants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of ſin unto death, or of obedience unto righteouſneſs* (*d*)? When you ſurvey multitudes among thoſe who are denominated Chriſtians, who were baptiſed in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghoſt, who profeſs to believe that the Son of God died on the croſs to purchaſe for them the pardon of ſin, the ſanctifying influence of

(*d*) Rom. vi. 16.

the

the Holy Spirit, and the everlaſting glories of the kingdom of heaven: when you ſurvey multitudes of theſe nominal Chriſtians, together with numbers who ſcarcely term themſelves Chriſtians, yielding themſelves with eagerneſs as ſervants to ſin; when you ſee them giving up their whole hearts to things temporal inſtead of things eternal; when you ſee them acting as the ſlaves of the world, the fleſh, and the devil, inſtead of ſtriving to become the children of the Moſt High: is it not time for every miniſter of the goſpel to addreſs his congregation in the words of Moſes; to cry out to them, "Who among "you is on the Lord's ſide?" Is it not time for every one of you to put the queſtion to his own heart; "On whoſe ſide am I act-"ing? Am I on the ſide of the Lord?" Is it not time for every one of you, who is in ſincerity and truth on the Lord's ſide, to ſtand forth and prove himſelf to be ſo? Can you remain for a ſingle hour indifferent and with a quiet mind, without knowing whether you have ſtronger reaſons to hope that God regards you as on his ſide, than to fear that he looks upon you as his enemy? Are you ignorant that he who is not with God is againſt him: that he, who does not receive

God as his maſter and love God as his ſupreme delight, is the ſervant of the devil, and the enemy of God? Do you forget that ſalvation through Chriſt will be beſtowed on thoſe only, who prove themſelves to be on the Lord's ſide: and that for thoſe, who are not on the ſide of the Lord, nothing will remain but tribulation and anguiſh and everlaſting deſtruction, when the Lord Jeſus ſhall be revealed in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Goſpel?

To ſay that we are on the ſide of the Lord is eaſy. The ſacrifice of the lips is an offering that coſteth nothing: and is therefore an offering which nearly all men are ready to make. But God requires from thoſe who profeſs to be on his ſide not empty words, but evidences and demonſtrations of their ſincerity. I fully truſt that there are ſome, and I pray that there may be many, preſent in this aſſembly, who are thoroughly in earneſt in religion: thoroughly and zealouſly deſirous to give proof day by day that they are ſtedfaſtly on the ſide of the Lord; and prepared to receive with gladneſs any inſtructions or advice, which may contribute under the divine bleſſing to enable them faithfully

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to ſerve the heavenly Maſter whom they have choſen. Let me endeavour therefore to aſſiſt them in purſuing their holy purpoſe.

II. If you would prove yourſelf to be on the ſide of the Lord; conſign yourſelf entirely to his governance, and receive with immediate and complete ſubmiſſion every one of his commandments. Conſider the character and the duty of a ſoldier. A ſoldier who confides in his general, and deſires to obtain his approbation, never in the ſmalleſt inſtance diſputes his orders; and conſtantly holds himſelf prepared to carry them into effect. On the ſagacity of his commander he relies for the eſtabliſhment of plans, and the direction of meaſures, by which their common enemies are to be reſiſted and ſubdued: and is conſcious that his own wiſdom and ſafety conſiſt in punctual, vigilant, and courageous obedience. Such muſt be your conduct as ſoldiers of Jeſus Chriſt. Surrender yourſelves without reſerve to the guidance of the captain of your ſalvation. Fight the good fight of faith. Embrace with undoubting confidence every doctrine diſcloſed in his holy word. He is the Son of God: he knows what is the mind of his al-

mighty Father. He knows how great is the corruption of human nature; how odious ſin is in the ſight of God; and how dreadful are the conſequences which naturally attend it. He knows that it is only through his atoning blood that ſinners can be ſaved: that it is only through the ſanctifying influence of the Holy Ghoſt that his goſpel can be accepted and obeyed. Theſe momentous truths he has revealed to you in the Scriptures. Believe them, if you look for eternal life. Believe the Son of God, the Lord of glory, who came down from heaven, who died for you. Take him for your Maſter and your King. Range yourſelves on his ſide. Let his will be your will, his ways your ways. Fly to him, as the Levites fled to Moſes, with hearts prepared to liſten with perfect ſubmiſſion to all his commands; and reſolve, through his bleſſed help, to ſerve him faithfully and zealouſly unto death.

If you are thus bent on devoting yourſelves to the ſervice of the Lord; remember that there is only one method by which you can give proof that you are on his ſide. *He that doeth righteouſneſs, is righteous. He that keepeth my commandments, he it is that loveth me. Ye are my friends, if ye do that which I*

command you. If any man love me, he will keep my words. This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments (*e*). It is thus that you are to manifeſt yourſelf the faithful ſervant of God, the determined ſoldier of Chriſt Jeſus. It is thus that you are to contend againſt his enemies; it is thus that you are to promote his glory; it is thus that you are to be inſtrumental in extending his kingdom. The firſt conqueſt which you will labour to preſent to your Lord, is the conqueſt of yourſelf. You will fervently ſeek his grace that you may be enabled to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Chriſt. "I am not my own"—this will be the language of your heart—"I am not my "own: I am bought with a price. I am not "my own: I belong to the Lord Jeſus. I am "not to live unto myſelf; but unto him who "died for me. I am a ſoldier ſtationed upon "duty; not to ſeek my own pleaſure, but to "perform the will of my heavenly King. I "am now, if need be, to endure hardſhip. "I am to be watchful, patient, laborious, con-"tented with my lot. I am to give full "proof of my miniſtry. I am to deny my-"ſelf. I am to keep under my body and "bring it into ſubjection. I am to reſiſt the

(*e*) 1 John, iii. 7. John, xiv. 21. 23. xv. 14. 1 John, v. 3.

" temptations of the world, the fleſh and the " devil, the adverſaries of God and of my " ſoul. If ſenſual appetite, if the love of " eaſe, if a thirſt for honour, or riches, or " power; if joy, or ſorrow, or hope, or fear, " or any earthly allurement, prevail upon me " to abandon my poſt: I am no longer on " the ſide of the Lord; I am a traitor to him; " I take part with his enemies; I forfeit that " crown of glory, which my gracious God " has prepared for me if I faithfully ſerve " him unto the end; and I plunge myſelf " into the pit of everlaſting deſtruction."

If your heart be at length ſtedfaſt with the Lord, you will ſeize with delight every opportunity which he affords you of contributing to win others to his kingdom. The commiſſion with which the Levites were charged by Moſes againſt their ſinful countrymen was a miniſtry of vengeance. *Thus ſaith the Lord God of Iſrael: Put every man his ſword by his ſide; and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and ſlay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour. Conſecrate yourſelves today to the Lord, even every man upon his ſon and upon his brother* (*f*). Very different is the commiſſion with which God charges you reſpecting thoſe who are

(*f*) Exod. xxxii. 27–29.

not

not on his ſide. He charges you with a commiſſion of love, with a miniſtry of reconciliation. To you he ſays; *Let your light ſo ſhine before men, that they may ſee your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven. Follow after the things which make for peace; and things wherewith one may edify another* (*g*). Give to religion the full effect of your example, of your influence, of your recommendation. Shew that you aſſign to religion the firſt place in your heart from a decided conviction that the firſt place is its due; and that, where it does not hold that place, happineſs will never take up her abode. Let others be won to the love of God by diſcerning the bleſſed effects of that love upon yourſelf. Let them perceive that in conſequence of having ſet your heart upon God, you are become more humble, more gentle, more tender, more kind, more bountiful, more amiable, more happy. Let them perceive that your converſation is in heaven; that you feel yourſelf, and feel yourſelf without regret, a ſtranger and pilgrim upon earth; that you are not diſquieted, like the men of the preſent world, by diſtracting cares and conflicting paſſions; but that you are waiting in patient and cheerful ſerenity, under

(*g*) Matt. v. 16. Rom. xiv. 19.

every

every diſpenſation of providence, for the bleſſed hope which is ſet before you, the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt. If theſe fruits of holineſs, if this peace and joy in the Holy Ghoſt, ſhine forth in your conduct: verily there will be thoſe among the wicked, who will ſmite their breaſts and will ſay; "Happy is the "man that feareth the Lord. The fear of "the Lord is the beginning of wiſdom; and "to depart from evil is underſtanding. I "have left the paths of uprightneſs, to walk "in the ways of darkneſs. I have rejoiced "to do evil; and have delighted in the fro-"wardneſs of the wicked. I have forſaken "the guide of my youth, and forgotten the "covenant of my God. But I will fly to "the Redeemer who is mighty to ſave. I "will ſeek the Spirit of grace and of ſup-"plication. I will go and ſay unto my "Father; Father! I have ſinned againſt thee. "I will turn unto the Lord, for he will have "mercy upon me; and to my God, for he "will abundantly pardon. The ways of re-"ligion are the ways of pleaſantneſs: and all "her paths are peace!"

Stand forth then, ye who are on the ſide of the Lord: ſtand forth to ſave your own ſouls and the ſouls of others. Children of the

the faith of Abraham; heirs of the promiſes of God! Be ye ſtedfaſt, be vigilant, and fear not. You ſerve a Maſter, who will never forſake his people. You ſerve an unchangeable Father, who will abundantly perform his covenant. You ſerve Him who liveth for ever and ever, King of kings and Lord of lords; Him who has all power in earth and in heaven, in time and in eternity; Him in whoſe hand is mercy, and glory, and bleſſedneſs, and everlaſting ſalvation. What ſhall prove capable of ſhaking your love to God and your Redeemer? Are you tempted by the riches of this world? Shall the poor and periſhable and unſatisfactory treaſures of the preſent life induce you to renounce an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away, laid up in heaven for the righteous? Are you ſolicited by ſinful pleaſures? Will you renounce, for the guilty indulgences of a moment, that fulneſs of joy which is at the right hand of the Omnipotent for evermore? Are you moved by corrupt cuſtoms, or by the ſcoffs and ridicule of the wicked? Will you ſeek honour from man rather than from God? Will you not confeſs Chriſt upon earth, that he may confeſs you before his Father, and the holy angels, at the day of judgement? *Children* of the Moſt High!

keep

keep yourſelves from idols (*h*). Stand faſt in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Senſible of your own utter weakneſs, take unto yourſelves the whole armour of God. Of yourſelves you can do nothing: but through the all-ſufficient grace of Chriſt you can become more than conquerors. Set your faces as a rock againſt ſin, which encompaſſes you every inſtant. You have made your choice: you have taken the ſide of the Lord: cleave with ſimplicity and ſingleneſs of heart unto Him. Be not deterred, be not enticed, from your holy reſolution by a world, whoſe friendſhip is enmity againſt the ſovereign to whom you have vowed your allegiance. The world cannot love you, becauſe you are not of the world. Will you temporiſe in your conduct? Will you compromiſe your principles? *Come out from among them, and be ye ſeparate, ſaith the Lord; and touch not the unclean thing. And I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you: and ye ſhall be my ſons and daughters, ſaith the Lord Almighty* (*i*).

(*h*) 1 John, v. 21. (*i*) 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18.

SERMON VIII.

On the Sin of diſſembling with God.

JEREMIAH, xlii. 20.

Ye diſſembled in your hearts, when ye ſent me unto the Lord your God, ſaying; Pray for us unto the Lord our God: and according unto all that the Lord our God ſhall ſay, ſo declare unto us, and we will do it.

THE wiſdom of the ſupreme Intelligence, ſo conſpicuous in his works, ſhines equally in the ſtructure of the writings which he inſpired. Scripture is not a dry code of laws, a barren ſyſtem of prohibitions and commandments. Its ordinances and injunctions are continually enlivened, illuſtrated, and enforced, by examples. Search throughout the old Teſtament and the New. Examine the hiſtorical, the prophetical, the epiſtolary compoſi-

tions. Carry on your ſcrutiny to thoſe portions of the ſacred records, which are avowedly the moſt preceptive. You will perceive almoſt in every page the bleſſings which flow from righteouſneſs, and the miſeries attendant on guilt, delineated and impreſſed in deſcriptions derived from real perſons and actual events. The word of God, like his book of nature, teems with life. Every part is animated by incident and character. Paſt generations return from the dead, ages unborn preſs forward before their time into being, to admoniſh the exiſting inhabitants of the earth. In the Son of God become man we behold an all-perfect model of univerſal holineſs. In the proceedings of numberleſs other individuals, who ſtand pourtrayed in the living colours of truth; we behold patterns to imitate, or beacons to ſhun. On the one hand, faith, holineſs, charity, truth, ſtedfaſtneſs, patience, meekneſs, purity, compaſſion, and the reſt of the train of heavenly graces, are exhibited; each diſtinct and prominent, yet with greater or leſs ſtrength of repreſentation in different characters. On the other, unbelief, unrighteouſneſs, ſelfiſhneſs, deceit, irreſolution, fretfulneſs, arrogance, uncleanneſs, cruelty, with other criminal paſſions, diſplay their dominion, more or leſs limited,

over

over multitudes held in bondage. That the intereſting picture of human nature may be in every point complete, the aſſemblage of good and evil blended in the ſame boſom; and even the grievous tranſgreſſions, ſources of bitter remorſe, into which patriarchs and prophets and apoſtles were occaſionally betrayed; are painted with unfailing impartiality and preciſion. Man is taught to know what he is, that he may the more eaſily and the more willingly learn what he ought to become.

The portion of ſacred hiſtory which I am about to propoſe to your view unfolds a ſcene of diſobedience characteriſed not by ſudden error and unforeſeen timidity, but by bold and hypocritical premeditation. When Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, had entirely ſubdued the Jews, whom God, on account of their obſtinate impiety, had at length delivered into his hand; he deſtroyed Jeruſalem by fire, and carried away captive into a diſtant quarter of his dominions the principal part of the nation. A conſiderable number however of the pooreſt claſs of the people he permitted to continue in their native land. He diſtributed among them fields and vineyards: and appointed Gedaliah, one of their own

own countrymen, to be their governor. In a ſhort time Gedaliah was treacherouſly killed by Iſhmael, a Jew of the royal blood, who appears to have envied his pre-eminence, and at the inſtigation of the Ammonites had formed a conſpiracy againſt him: and together with him were ſlain the Chaldean ſoldiers, whom Nebuchadnezzar had left under his command. Iſhmael was ſpeedily overcome, and driven into baniſhment by the ſurviving friends of Gedaliah. But all the inhabitants of Judea trembled at the proſpect of the indignation, which they foreſaw would be kindled in the breaſt of the king of Babylon, when he ſhould receive tidings of the murder of his governor and his ſoldiers. They purpoſed therefore to fly for refuge into Egypt. But they deemed it becoming in the firſt inſtance to apply for directions from God. They requeſted the prophet Jeremiah to conſult the Lord whether they ſhould depart into Egypt, or not: and ſolemnly declared, that they would act in perfect obedience to the anſwer which ſhould be returned to them. *All the captains of the forces, and all the people from the leaſt even unto the greateſt came near, and ſaid unto Jeremiah the prophet: Pray for us unto the Lord thy God, that the Lord thy God may ſhew us the*

the way wherein we may walk, and the thing that we may do. The Lord be a true and faithful witneſs between us, if we do not even according to all things, for which the Lord thy God ſhall ſend thee to us. Whether it be good or whether it be evil, we will obey the voice of the Lord our God to whom we ſend thee; that it may be well with us, when we obey the voice of the Lord our God. After an interval of ten days, the word of the Lord came in reply, by the mouth of Jeremiah, to the people. God commanded them to remain in Judea: and promiſed, on condition of their obedience to his command, that he would be with them, that he would ſave them from the king of Babylon, and would cauſe them to dwell in ſecurity and peace. But the all-knowing Searcher of hearts clearly diſcerned, that their application to him for direction, and their deliberate engagement that they would be entirely guided by his counſel, were pretence and mockery. He ſaw that they had decidedly purpoſed from the beginning, and, notwithſtanding his prohibition, were ſtill reſolutely determined, to remove into Egypt. Jeremiah therefore proceeded, according to the orders of the Almighty, to denounce that if they perſiſted in their deſign, they ſhould be overtaken by the vengeance of Nebuchadnezzar in that very land

of Egypt, where they ſuppoſed that they ſhould be completely beyond its reach: that they ſhould periſh there by famine, by peſtilence, and by the ſword; that their name ſhould become a reproach, an aſtoniſhment, and a curſe; and that not even a ſingle individual ſhould again behold the land of Judea, or eſcape from the evil which God would bring upon them.

Let me endeavour, under the bleſſing of divine grace, to elucidate and to apply to your edification, the inſtruction which may be derived from this narrative.

I. Conſider in the firſt place, what was that great and general duty, againſt which the Jews, on the occaſion now before us, rebelled.

Ye diſſembled, ſaid Jeremiah, *in your hearts*. The firſt duty of religion is to ſurrender the heart to God. Without that ſurrender there can be no religion. *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart.* This is the great commandment to the Jew and to the Chriſtian. To the obſervance of this commandment the promiſes of divine favour have ever been annexed. *If thou return unto the Lord*, ſaith Moſes, *with all thine heart; the*

Lord

Lord will have compaſſion upon thee (*a*). *Ye ſhall find me*, ſaith God, by the voice of Jeremiah, *when ye ſhall ſearch for me with all your heart* (*b*). *If thou believeſt with all thine heart*, ſaith Philip to the Ethiopian, *thou mayeſt be baptized* (*c*). The Jews of whom the prophet ſpeaks in the text reſembled their future countrymen in the days of our Saviour. They were a people that drew nigh unto God with their mouth, and honoured him with their lips; but their heart was far from him. *Ye diſſembled in your hearts when ye ſent me unto the Lord your God, ſaying; Pray for us unto the Lord our God: and according to all that the Lord our God ſhall ſay, ſo declare unto us, and we will do it.* They diſſembled; though they had bound themſelves in the preſence of God by the moſt ſacred promiſes, that they would ſcrupulouſly perform whatever he ſhould command. My brethren! You have bound yourſelves to the performance of the ſame duty by promiſes no leſs ſacred. You yourſelves, no leſs ſolemnly than the Jews, even *all the people from the leaſt unto the greateſt, have come near and ſaid; The Lord be a true and faithful witneſs between us that we will obey the voice of the Lord our God.*

(*a*) Deut. xxx. 1—3. (*b*) Jerem. xxix. 13.
(*c*) Acts, viii. 36, 37.

At your baptiſm, you drew near and promiſed by your ſureties that you would obediently keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the ſame all the days of your life. Moſt of you have again drawn near at the office of confirmation, and renewed the ſolemn promiſe and vow which were made in your name at your baptiſm; ratifying and confirming the ſame in your own perſons, and acknowledging yourſelves bound to believe and to practiſe all thoſe things which your ſureties then undertook on your behalf. A large proportion of you have frequently drawn near to the ſacramental table; and have there profeſſed repentance of your ſins, and a full purpoſe to lead a new life, to follow the commandments of God, and thenceforth to walk in his holy ways. On this very day, and on every day when you have attended the public worſhip, you have drawn near and requeſted of God, that he would give to you that due ſenſe of all his mercies, that your hearts may be unfeignedly thankful; and that you may ſhew forth his praiſe, not only with your lips but with your lives, by giving up yourſelves to his ſervice, and by walking before him in holineſs and righteouſneſs all your days, through Jeſus Chriſt your Lord. The Jews, in their

ſolemn

ſolemn profeſſions, diſſembled. My brethren, have you diſſembled in yours?

Diſſimulation, like other ſins, admits of degrees. The heart may diſſemble radically and entirely, ſo as to be wholly hypocritical; ſo as not to feel any portion of that love to God, of that faith, of that gratitude, of that ſenſe of duty, of that purpoſe of obedience which the tongue expreſſes. Or it may diſſemble partially; feeling weakly and inſufficiently thoſe ſentiments towards Him, which dwell with parade and ſeeming warmth upon the lips. The doom which awaits the complete hypocrite, cannot be doubted. Let the partial hypocrite beware, leſt he at laſt come to the ſame place of torment.

II. Conſider in the next place, each of you for himſelf, how ſtrong is the probability that you may be guilty, in a greater or a leſs degree, of diſſembling in your heart before God. Remember the natural corruption of the human heart. The heart is originally averſe to holineſs, repleniſhed with the ſeeds of every ſin, and ſcarcely to be ſearched or penetrated by human eyes. *The imagination of man's heart*, ſaith the Scripture, *is evil from his youth. The heart of the ſons of men is full of evil. The heart is deceitful above all things and deſperately wicked. Who can know*

it (*d*) ? Have not you reaſon to dread that your heart thus ſubjected originally to the dominion of ſin, may not yet be purified from diſſembling againſt God? Have you not reaſon to dread that your heart, by nature thus ſtored with duplicity, thus difficult to be diſcerned, may deceive yourſelf? Reflect farther, of what multitudes the Scriptures make mention; multitudes exiſting at different periods, and among the very people peculiarly favoured with the knowledge of true religion, and in the moſt impreſſive manner dedicated to God; as having diſſembled againſt Him, even ſo as utterly to have departed from Him. At the time of the deluge, only eight perſons out of the whole human race were preſerved by divine mercy from deſtruction. When the Iſraelites were commanded to enter the land of Canaan; Caleb and Joſhua, together with Moſes and Aaron, and perhaps ſome few individuals beſides, were the only perſons of the whole congregation of Iſrael who remained faithful to the Lord of Hoſts. When the Jews, to whom Jeremiah addreſſed the words of the text, were commanded to render the promiſed obedience to their God, and to abſtain from going down into Egypt; *all the people*, with the exception as it ſhould ſeem

(*d*) Gen. viii. 21. Eccl. ix. 3. Jerem. xvii. 9.

only

only of the prophet himſelf and his friend Baruch, *obeyed not the voice of the Lord, to dwell in the land of Judah.* When Jeſus Chriſt called the world to repentance, and manifeſted himſelf to be the Son of God by the moſt deciſive miracles: how few were there out of the multitudes which had flattered him with their lips who did not ſpeedily prove that they had diſſembled with Him in their hearts! How few who preferred to walk with him in the narrow way that leadeth unto life, compared with the crowds which thronged the broad road that leadeth to deſtruction! What is the caſe in the preſent day? I wiſh not to encourage myſelf or you in drawing invidious compariſons. But we cannot be blind to plain and notorious facts. We have in our hands the word of God, which deſcribes the character of a true Chriſtian. We have before our eyes the practice of the world. We cannot but compare the one with the other. When we compare them, we cannot but perceive how vaſt is the number of profeſſed Chriſtians, who evince little of the ſpirit of true chriſtianity in their principles and conduct: and therefore ſtand ſelf-convicted as diſſemblers in their hearts before the Moſt High. When you call to remembrance the multitudes even

among thoſe who ſtyled themſelves the followers of God, which in ancient times the ſinfulneſs and deceitfulneſs of the heart betrayed into hypocriſy: when you ſurvey the multitudes of his profeſſed followers, which in this your day the ſame ſinfulneſs and deceitfulneſs render hypocritical before Him: have you not reaſon for ſerious dread that you may yourſelf be found a diſſembler in his ſight?

III. I proceed to lay before you, and to exemplify by ſome inſtances, a ſcriptural rule, which may aſſiſt you in diſcovering whether, if the Son of God were now to call you to judgement, you would be found diſſemblers in your hearts.

Where your treaſure is, ſaith our Lord, *there will your heart be alſo* (*e*). In other words, Whatever be the object which you judge and feel to be the moſt valuable; concerning that object will your heart ſhew itſelf to be the moſt ſteadily and the moſt deeply intereſted. Apply this rule to yourſelf. Examine yourſelf by it. It is thus that you may diſcover with abſolute certainty whether your heart is fixed upon God, or whether it diſſembles before Him.

(*e*) Matt. vi. 21.

Compare then the pains which you employ, the vigilance which you exerciſe, the anxiety which you feel, concerning worldly objects, on the one hand; on the other, concerning religion. When you hear your friend ſlandered or your parent injuriouſly treated; you are moved with indignation, you are diſtreſſed and afflicted. When you hear the name of God profaned; are you more deeply grieved? When you perceive Him to be ſlighted and inſulted; are you more ſeverely troubled in your heart? If not; you do not give the firſt place in your heart to God. You do but diſſemble with Him, when you profeſs that you love him above all things.

Again. When you receive a kindneſs, a great and an undeſerved kindneſs, from a friend; you feel, I preſume, warm and durable emotions of gratitude, and an earneſt deſire to render to your benefactor ſuch a return, in proportion to your ability, as may be acceptable to Him. You are receiving every day from God bleſſings infinitely ſuperior to all the kindneſſes, which can be conferred upon you by any of your fellow-creatures. Do you feel then ſtill more lively and durable emotions of gratitude to Him? Do you feel a ſtill more earneſt deſire to render to Him through Chriſt that acceptable tribute

bute of faith and love and holineſs of life, which his grace is ever ready to enable you to offer? If not; you do not give the firſt place in your heart to God. You do but diſſemble with Him, when you profeſs that you love him above all things.

Again. Your worldly proſperity is an object which you purſue with induſtry and ſolicitude. Are you ſtill more diligent, more anxious in purſuing the welfare of your ſoul? Are you more earneſtly bent on growth in grace, than on the accumulation of property? Are you more eager to advance in religious knowledge, than in knowledge which will enable you to augment your wealth? Are you more watchful to ſeek for religious friends and connections, than for thoſe which may forward your preſent intereſt, or that of your family? If not; you do not give the firſt place in your heart to God. You do but diſſemble with Him, when you profeſs that you love Him above all things.

Again. You have various occupations to which you reſort, as opportunities offer themſelves, from inclination and choice. Among theſe is religion to be found? Does religion ſtand at the head of them? Do you delight in the ſtudy of the ſcriptures? Do you delight in public worſhip; in its adorations, its prayers, its praiſes, its thankſgivings? Do you delight in

in commemorating the atoning death of your Redeemer at his Sacramental table? Do you delight in meditations upon God; upon his goodneſs and mercy; upon ſalvation through Chriſt; upon the hope of dwelling with Him in holineſs and happineſs hereafter? Do you delight to converſe privately with your family or with a Chriſtian friend, on theſe ſubjects? Do you find all other pleaſures and ſatisfactions unintereſting and dead, when compared with thoſe which have religion at their root? If not; you do not give to God the firſt place in your heart. You do but diſſemble with Him, when you profeſs that you love Him above all things.

I will mention only one example more. When you are informed of the events, which befal another perſon, you rejoice, if they are ſuch as promote his worldly advantage; you lament, if they impair it. Do you experience greater joy, when you are aſſured of his advancement in religion? Do you experience greater ſorrow, if you learn that he has gone backward in the ways of righteouſneſs? Do you judge of all changes in the ſituation of a perſon for whom you are intereſted, principally by the influence which they ſeem likely to have on his religious proſpects? You hear that he has entered into the ſtate of marriage.

Do

Do you at once feel more ſolicitous to enquire whether his wife be ſteadily pious; than whether ſhe be of ſuperior underſtanding, accompliſhed, and rich? He removes to a diſtant part of the country. Are you more grieved to learn that he is thrown into the hands of companions calculated to endanger his ſalvation; than to be informed that his new place of abode will probably be deſtructive of his health? He has loſt his child or the wife of his boſom. Are your prayers that his affliction may be ſanctified more fervent than thoſe for its removal? You ponder on ſchemes and labour in exertions for his benefit. In all your plans, in all your efforts, are you more anxious to be made the inſtrument of ſtrengthening him in faith and good works, than of forwarding his temporal ſucceſs: of guarding him from thoſe evils which war againſt the ſoul, than from thoſe which aſſault the body? If not; you do not give to God the firſt place in your heart. You do but diſſemble with Him, when you profeſs that you love Him above all things; that all which the Lord your God commandeth, you will do.

IV. My brethren! a part at leaſt of the words of the prophet, as delivered in the text, is

is applicable to your conduct this day. By preſenting yourſelves in this houſe of God, you have in fact ſaid to his miniſters, *Pray for us unto the Lord our God; and according unto all that the Lord our God ſhall ſay, ſo declare unto us and we will do it.* "Offer up "unto God on our behalf the ſupplications re- "corded in the liturgy of our church. And "in your diſcourſe from the pulpit, explain "to us from the word of God our duty as "Chriſtians, and we will perform it." Whether the remaining words of the text, the charge which Jeremiah pronounced againſt the Jews, *Ye have diſſembled in your hearts*, be alſo applicable to you, is a queſtion which it is not mine to decide. The truth is known to the Searcher of hearts. It is open and naked before the eyes of Him from whom no ſecrets are withdrawn. It is diſcoverable by you; by every one for himſelf. Examine yourſelves, when you are returned to privacy at home, by that ſcriptural rule, which I have ſtated and endeavoured to exemplify for your inſtruction. Accompany that examination with humble prayer for the grace of the holy Spirit; that he may enlighten your underſtandings, awaken your conſciences, and enable you to judge ſincerely and impartially whether your hearts are ſtedfaſt with God,

or

or whether you are diſſemblers in his ſight. The neceſſity, the ſupreme importance, of ſuch an examination I would preſs upon you in the ſtrongeſt language. Do I recommend it to any among you even with greater earneſtneſs than to others? It is to thoſe, who flatter themſelves that they ſtand in need of it the leaſt. I would detain you from it no longer than while I recal to your thoughts the vengeance which has overtaken thoſe, who in former ages diſſembled with God; vengeance ordained to be an emblem and a pledge of the certainty of that perdition, which ſhall for ever overwhelm all who diſſemble with Him in their hearts. What befel the diſſemblers of the old world? They periſhed to a man in the deluge. What befel the congregation of Iſrael, when they refuſed to render to God their covenanted obedience, and to march forward at his command into the land of Canaan? They periſhed to a man in the wilderneſs. What befel the Jews who refuſed to liſten to Jeremiah, and obeyed not the voice of the Lord to dwell in Judea? They were overtaken in Egypt by the king of Babylon, from whoſe power they imagined themſelves ſecure; and were utterly and miſerably deſtroyed. Concerning the diſſemblers in the old world, God proclaimed; *I will deſtroy*

them from off the face of the earth. Of the diſſembling congregation of Iſrael in the days of Moſes, he ſolemnly affirmed; *They ſhall not ſee the land. I have ſworn in my wrath, that they ſhall not enter into my reſt.* Of the Jews who diſſembled when they enquired concerning his will by Jeremiah, he pronounced; *Behold I will ſend Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon; and will ſet his throne in Egypt. Ye ſhall die by the ſword, by the famine, and by the peſtilence, in the place whither ye deſire to go and to ſojourn. None ſhall eſcape.* All theſe predicted judgements were punctually accompliſhed. So ſhall be accompliſhed every word of God. Where are all the unrepenting diſſemblers of all paſt ages now? They are reſerved in chains and darkneſs unto the judgement of the great day. Where ſhall be all the unrepenting diſſemblers of the preſent age? They ſhall be reſerved in the ſame chains under the ſame darkneſs to the ſame judgement. *All liars*, ſaith the Lord;—and who is of all liars the moſt guilty, but he who diſſembleth with his God?—*All liars ſhall have their portion in the lake which burneth with fire and brimſtone* (*f*). Whoever thou art, who diſſembleſt in thine heart with thy Judge; look forward to the hour that

(*f*) Rev. xxi. 8.

awaiteth

awaiteth thee if thou abideſt in thy diſſimulation. Look forward to the hour, when thoſe dreadful words, *Thou haſt not lied unto men but unto God*, at the ſound of which Ananias fell down dead, ſhall be to thee the ſentence of death eternal.

And is hope then excluded? Is the diſſembling heart irreclaimable? There is one, to whom nothing is impoſſible. There is one whoſe transforming power hypocriſy itſelf cannot eſcape. *The preparation of the heart is from the Lord* (*g*). In his hand the ſtone becomes fleſh, the ſcarlet white as ſnow. In his hand all things are renewed. *Cleanſe your hands, ye ſinners: purify your hearts, ye double-minded* (*h*). Behold, we were born in ſin: how ſhall we be cleanſed? We are altogether vile: how ſhall we be purified? *Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts. I am with you, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts. According to the word that I covenanted with you, my Spirit remaineth among you. Fear ye not* (*i*). Alleluia! Glory be to thee, Lord God Omnipotent! Light is ariſen on my darkneſs. *I can do all things through Chriſt who ſtrengtheneth me. Do we yet lin-*

(*g*) Prov. xvi. 1. (*h*) James, iv. 8. (*i*) Zech. iv. 6. Haggai, ii. 4, 5.

ger?

ger? Come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord (*k*). Let us be wiſe, while there is yet time for wiſdom. *Let us rend our hearts and turn unto the Lord:* let us *fear and ſerve him in ſincerity and truth.* Let us *defer not to pay our vows unto the Moſt High. Let us join ourſelves unto the Lord in a perpetual covenant that ſhall not be forgotten* (*l*).

(*k*) Philipp. iv. 13. Iſaiah, ii. 5. (*l*) Joel, ii. 13. Joſhua, xxiv. 14. Eccl. v. 4. Jerem. l. 5.

SERMON IX.

On the Nature and the Conſequences of Excuſes for not giving up the Heart to Religion.

LUKE, xiv. 18.

And they all with one Conſent began to make Excuſe.

INSTRUCTION poſſeſſes peculiar force, when derived from incidents which intereſt the mind. Facts ſeize upon the memory more powerfully than precepts. The recollection of the former recalls the remembrance of the latter. The precept, thus recalled, preſents itſelf under characters of animation and propriety, which confer additional energy on its native importance.

It was the uſual practice of our Saviour, when favourable opportunities aroſe, to take advantage of circumſtances immediately paſſing before the eyes of his followers for the purpoſe

purpoſe of impreſſing religious truth. When he ſpoke the words which have been recited, he was ſitting at meat at the table of a wealthy Phariſee. From the antecedent part of the chapter it appears that he had already taken occaſion twice, from incidents which occurred at this entertainment, to deliver an important leſſon to thoſe who were preſent. Firſt; in reproving the pride which impelled them eagerly to contend for the places accounted the moſt honourable; he taught the excellence of humility in the ſight of men as well as of God. And afterwards, he admoniſhed them not to be anxious, when they prepared a dinner or a ſupper, to aſſemble their opulent relations and neighbours, in order that they might be themſelves invited to feaſts in return: but rather to call to their table the poor, the blind, and the diſtreſſed, from whom they could look for no retribution, that God, the friend of the wretched, might bleſs them, and recompenſe them at the reſurrection of the juſt. A perſon of the company was conſiderably ſtruck with theſe diſcourſes; and exclaimed, *Bleſſed is he that ſhall eat bread in the kingdom of God:* bleſſed is he who ſhall receive the inſtruction of the promiſed Redeemer; and after having been admitted as a member of his kingdom upon

earth, ſhall finally become a partaker of the glories and happineſs of heaven. Whether this man believed Jeſus Chriſt to be the promiſed Redeemer is very doubtful. Our Lord however replied to the obſervation by a parable: in which he predicted that numbers, who profeſſed a zealous deſire to hear and obey the goſpel, would diſregard and reject it when preached to them; and would prefer the purſuits of the preſent world to the ſalvation of their ſouls. *A certain man*, ſaid he, *made a great ſupper, and bade many.* God has prepared a glorious kingdom for thoſe who ſhall embrace and ſtedfaſtly obey the goſpel of his Son; and has invited all the human race to participate in its bleſſings. *And he ſent his ſervant at ſupper time, to ſay to them that were bidden, Come: for all things are now ready.* At the period ordained from eternity Jeſus Chriſt appeared upon earth, and preached the goſpel to the Jews. After his aſcenſion he preached it by his diſciples to many other nations. At this day he preaches it by his miniſters to you, and to millions in various parts of the world. He now invites you, as in former ages he invited the Jews and the Gentiles, to come unto Him for ſalvation; and encourages you with the aſſurance that you cannot be more ſolicitous

to aſk than he is to beſtow. How did the Jews, to whom the offer was firſt made, receive it? *They all with one conſent began to make excuſe. The firſt ſaid, I have bought a piece of ground, and I muſt needs go and ſee it. I pray thee have me excuſed. And another ſaid, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them. I pray thee have me excuſed. And another ſaid, I have married a wife: and therefore I cannot come.* The nature of theſe excuſes will be examined hereafter. At preſent it is ſufficient to obſerve that all the reſt who were invited had their pretences ready, ſome of one kind, ſome of another, for not going to the feaſt. *All* began to make excuſe. *So that ſervant came, and ſhewed his Lord theſe things. Then the maſter of the houſe, being angry, ſaid to his ſervant: Go out quickly into the ſtreets and lanes of the city; and bring in hither the poor and the maimed, and the halt and the blind.* The Jews refuſed to receive Jeſus Chriſt; and completed their guilt by crucifying him. The anger of God was kindled. He caſt them off from being his people. He commanded the miniſters of his word to go forth, and to preach the goſpel to the Gentiles: to the nations whom the Jews abhorred as outcaſts from the divine mercy; whom they beheld with an eye of ſuperiority not leſs contemp-

tuous than that with which the poor, the halt, and the blind, if ſtationed as gueſts at the table, would have been viewed by the proudeſt of thoſe originally invited to the feaſt. Still however the gueſt-chamber was not full. *The ſervant ſaid; Lord, it is done as thou haſt commanded: and yet there is room. And the Lord ſaid unto the ſervant; Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in*, by urgent importunity and perſuaſion conſtrain them to enter, *that my houſe may be filled. For I ſay unto you, that none of thoſe men which were bidden ſhall taſte of my ſupper.* Though the apoſtles preached the Chriſtian religion with great ſucceſs among many nations of the Gentiles, both in Aſia and Europe, and alſo in ſome of the coaſts of Africa; yet the kingdom of heaven was not repleniſhed with inhabitants, nor was the mercy of God exhauſted. He has therefore continued during more than ſeventeen hundred years to provide a conſtant ſupply of miniſters of his goſpel; and to ſend them forth even to the moſt diſtant corners of the earth, and to perſons ſunk in the loweſt ſtate of ignorance and wretchedneſs, calling them and earneſtly preſſing them to accept ſalvation through faith in the Lord Jeſus. And we know from the certain declarations of prophecy,

phecy, that he will graciouſly perſevere until the cloſe of all things to invite by his meſſengers all mankind to repent and believe; and that all *the kingdoms of this world ſhall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Chriſt.* We know that at laſt even the Jews themſelves ſhall look on Him whom their forefathers pierced; that they ſhall mourn with the deepeſt humiliation and anguiſh for the crucifixion of the great Redeemer; and with contrite hearts and faith unfeigned ſhall embrace the goſpel, and ſhall again be received as the people of God. But thoſe who have wilfully denied the Lord of glory, thoſe who have obſtinately ſcorned his offers of ſalvation, ſhall neither be admitted into his church on earth, nor into the glorious inheritance which he has prepared beyond the grave for his ſervants.

Such is the general import of this parable. Let us ſtudy through the bleſſing of God to apply it to ourſelves.

I. We learn in the firſt place the guilt and the dreadful conſequences of rejecting Chriſt; of refuſing to believe his religion, or of believing without obeying it. *Not one of thoſe who were bidden ſhall taſte of my ſupper.* When we had no claim to be delivered from

the puniſhment, which by our ſins we deſerved; much leſs to extend our views to an eternity of happineſs: the God of mercy was pleaſed of his own infinite goodneſs freely to offer to us both theſe bleſſings. He offered them to us through the blood of his own Son Jeſus Chriſt. His own Son undertook for our ſakes to come down upon earth; to aſſume the nature of man; and to die upon the croſs, that he might make atonement for our ſins, and purchaſe immortal glory for all who would accept him as their Saviour and faithfully obey his commandments. This is that love of Chriſt towards ſinful man, which aſtoniſhes, as the ſcriptures teach us, the very angels. This is the appointed method of ſalvation, by which alone we may be ſaved. It is in vain for preſumptuous men to ſeek to find fault and raiſe objections as to the plan, which the wiſdom and the inconceivable kindneſs of God have choſen for the recovery of the children of fallen Adam. It is in vain for any man to hope that he may be ſaved in any other method, or through the attainment of any other qualifications, than thoſe which are plainly ſtated in the goſpel. If you will not accept ſalvation in that method; if you will not labour to acquire thoſe qualifications: you will aſſuredly periſh, you will

will periſh by your own choice. If you reject the Son of God; he will be no Redeemer to you. If you profeſs to believe in him, but will not make it your conſtant aim through the influence of divine grace to obey him; you will as certainly periſh as if you openly denied him. You do in fact deny him in the moſt deciſive manner. You deny him by your actions. Whatever your lips may affirm, your actions proclaim; "I do not acknowledge Chriſt to be my Maſter: I will not be ſubject to his laws." He was ready to receive you: but you would not receive him. The guilt is your own: and the conſequences are your own. You refuſe pardon, and eternal happineſs: and the arm of divine juſtice plunges you into hell.

Do you complain of hard meaſure in theſe dealings of God? Turn to the parable. Suppoſe a perſon of wealth and eminence to have ſuſtained reiterated injuries from an inferior. Suppoſe the offender overtaken by miſery, and on the brink of ruin. Suppoſe the man whom he had injured generouſly to interpoſe in his behalf; to invite the criminal to his manſion, and ſpontaneouſly to offer to make important ſacrifices for the ſole purpoſe of reſtoring him to ſafety and happineſs. Suppoſe this benignity to be met with a diſdainful

ful refuſal. Is the victim of his own obſtinacy and pride to murmur becauſe he is abandoned to the conſequences of his choice? Or to raiſe the illuſtration, if it be poſſible, to a reſemblance ſomewhat leſs faint and imperfect of the tranſaction which it purpoſes to pourtray: ſuppoſe a ſubject indebted to the bounty of his ſovereign for every earthly bleſſing to renounce his allegiance, and to crown his ingratitude by the moſt daring treaſons. Suppoſe him arreſted by the arm of juſtice, and even now ſtanding on the ſcaffold. Suppoſe his royal maſter to diſpatch without ſolicitation an offer of pardon; to fling open for his admiſſion the doors of the palace; to hold forth to him unqualified forgiveneſs; to propoſe to him not merely the renovation of favour, and re-eſtabliſhment in all his antecedent honours and poſſeſſions, but additional wealth and privileges and dignity and power in a meaſure far ſurpaſſing the utmoſt ſtretch of his imagination. Suppoſe that the extenſion of this compaſſion, the exerciſe of this ineffable goodneſs, could not be rendered conſiſtent with the attributes of ſovereignty, and the general welfare of nations, by any methods except ſuch as would neceſſarily require the only ſon of the monarch previouſly to become the repreſentative

tive of the traitor, and in his ſtead to ſubmit to degradation, to ſufferings and to death. Suppoſe the ſon of his own accord to offer to become the ſacrifice. Suppoſe the father to aſſent to the offer. Suppoſe the ſacrifice to have taken place. Now fix your eyes on the object of theſe ſtupendous mercies. How do you behold him? Is he diſſolved in tears? Is he rent by agonizing remorſe? Is he fervently devoting in the ſincerity of his ſoul the remainder of his life, the whole of his exertions, of his faculties, of his heart, to the ſervice of his matchleſs benefactor? Behold him, if you are able to form to yourſelf the picture, continuing unmoved, devoid of gratitude, with enmity unmitigated, rejecting the offered pardon and all its conſequent bleſſings with careleſſneſs and contempt. Behold an emblem, a moſt inadequate emblem, of your own madneſs, of your own guilt, if you diſregard the ſalvation offered through the blood of the Son of God!

II. Advert in the next place to the excuſes, which are ſtated as having been advanced by ſome of thoſe who rejected the invitation of the Lord of the feaſt. The ſpirit of the excuſes alleged by the reſt, for all the excuſes flowed from the ſame principle in the heart, may be inferred from thoſe which are ſpeci-

fied. One ſaid; *I have bought a piece of ground, and I muſt needs go and ſee it.* Another ſaid; *I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them.* Another ſaid; *I have married a wife.* And for theſe ſeveral reaſons each of them profeſſed that he could not come to the entertainment. Our bleſſed Saviour well knew what was in man. He knew that the human heart, unenlightened by the Holy Spirit, would naturally be the ſame in all times and places. The excuſes which he repreſents theſe deſpiſers as alleging for not attending the entertainment purpoſely and gratuitouſly provided for them, are preciſely ſuch as numbers allege in this our day for not attending to religion. They are ſuch as numbers are bold enough openly to avow, when expediency requires the production of an apology; or ſuch as they ſecretly offer when pricked by conſcience to their own boſoms. "Religion," it is declared or whiſpered by theſe apologiſts for practical irreligion, "is undoubtedly a very excellent thing; "and in its proper meaſure juſtly to be ex- "pected from all. From every man is re- "quired a decorous regard to morality: from "perſons whoſe age or ſtation preſcribes gra- "vity, a higher degree of ſtrictneſs: from "the unoccupied and the unhappy, ſtill "greater

" greater attention to pious ſtudies and em-
" ployments; from the clergy all imaginable
" ſanctity. Nay we acknowledge, that in all
" men as much religion as is attainable is
" highly to be deſired. We lament that few
" perſons attend to religion ſo much as they
" might attend. And we are particularly
" ſcandalized at the deficiencies of thoſe, who
" have profeſſionally taken upon themſelves
" to be our inſtructors. But on ourſelves
" no demand beyond our preſent practice can
" reaſonably be made. Our time and our
" thoughts are already abſorbed by neceſſary
" or inevitable avocations. We are engaged
" in the active buſineſs of life; and cannot
" find leiſure for books and ſpeculative re-
" tirement. Our eſtates or our mercantile
" concerns call for continual care: and
" we know that he who makes not provi-
" ſion for his family neglects the duty of
" a parent and *is worſe than an infidel.* Or
" we are occupied in ſerving our country as
" members of her legiſlature, or as magiſtrates,
" or as officers in her fleets or armies, or as
" belonging to ſome of the numerous pro-
" feſſions by which ſociety is held together:
" and we are not ignorant that *mercy is better*
" *than ſacrifice.* Or, if we are unincumbered
" with any of the engagements which have

" been

" been mentioned; we are continually preſſed
" by others no leſs difficult to be avoided or
" poſtponed. Family connections, numerous
" acquaintance and friends, the ordinary re-
" ciprocation of civilities and viſits, the ſtated
" recurrence at home and abroad of innocent
" diverſions, bring the day to a cloſe almoſt
" as ſoon as we perceive it to have begun.
" Man was born for ſociety. *It is not good*
" *for man to be alone.* The ſocial intercourſe
" of life muſt be maintained by the requiſite
" obſervance of that courteſy, which an apoſ-
" tle has enjoined on all men. Harmleſs
" amuſements, eſſential to mental refreſhment
" and alacrity of ſpirits, cannot but be ap-
" proved by a religion which exhorts to cheer-
" fulneſs and joy. And, however abſurd may
" have been the diſputations of ignorant men;
" we are for our parts ſatisfied that friend-
" ſhip is inculcated by Chriſtianity. At any
" rate," it is finally obſerved, " be it buſineſs
" or ſome lighter occupation which has ſwal-
" lowed up our time; and even if it be ac-
" knowledged that with livelier vigilance we
" might have ſnatched ſomewhat more fre-
" quent, and ſomewhat longer intervals for re-
" ligious meditation: we truſt that our inat-
" tention has not been ſuch as to expoſe us
" to any extravagant cenſure. We have al-

" ways

"ways profeſſed our belief in religion. We "have occaſionally been preſent at its ordi- "nances. We have been indulgent huſbands, "careful parents, kind neighbours, uſeful mem- "bers of ſociety. And we are univerſally re- "garded as having regulated our conduct by "the niceſt principle of *honour*."

Vain and empty ſophiſtry, to diſguiſe the unſubdued *enmity of the carnal mind againſt God* (*a*)!

III. Farther: with reſpect to the excuſes deſcribed in the parable, there are two remarks, which I would recommend to your ſerious conſideration. Firſt; all the employments and engagements, which the perſons who were invited pleaded in apology for their abſence, were in themſelves perfectly lawful. To purchaſe a piece of ground and to go to ſee it was a circumſtance in its own nature untinctured with guilt. The cultivation of the earth, and induſtry in our proper callings, are duties which we are commanded to practiſe. Neither was there any thing naturally blamable in purchaſing five yoke of oxen and going to prove them. Then with reſpect to marriage; we know that it is the appointment of God, and is declared in the Scriptures to be honourable for all. Yet ob-

(*a*) Rom. viii. 7.

ſerve,

ſerve, ſecondly, that the perſons who made theſe excuſes were every one of them condemned. *I ſay unto you that none of thoſe men which were bidden ſhall taſte of my ſupper.* If theſe men were thus condemned; how much more dreadful would have been their puniſhment, if they had excuſed themſelves for the purpoſe of proſecuting ſome ſinful enterprize: if inſtead of lawful induſtry they had meditated ſome diſhoneſt undertaking; if, inſtead of honourable marriage, ſome plan of criminal indulgence had been in view! But, though their purſuits were all lawful; every one of the perſons was condemned. Why was this? Becauſe every one of the perſons was worldly-minded. His heart was not fixed upon promoting the glory of God, and proving by faith and holy obedience his love and gratitude to his Maker and Redeemer. His firſt object was not to be religious; but to be wealthy, or to proſecute his own pleaſure. The man that purchaſed the land, and the other that bought the oxen, were immerſed in ſolicitude concerning their property and poſſeſſions. *The cares of this world, and the deceitfulneſs of riches, choked the word; and it became unfruitful* (*b*). Land and oxen, and the profit which land and oxen

(*b*) Matt. xiii. 22.

were

were to produce, were their idols. God and his laws, Chriſt and the wonderful mercies which had been offered at his hand, had little if any ſhare of their thoughts. The man who had married a wife, had contracted an irreligious marriage. He had ſhewn, we may conclude, in that tranſaction the unconcern reſpecting religion which pervaded his character. He had ſelected his conſort merely for her perſonal appearance; or becauſe ſhe had an ample fortune; or becauſe her relations were able to puſh him into lucrative buſineſs; or for ſome other worldly reaſon. He had not made it his firſt and great ſtudy to learn before-hand whether ſhe was a truly pious woman, a faithful ſervant of the Almighty; whether ſhe would be a partner likely to help him forward in the way of ſalvation, and by inſtruction and example to train up a family in holineſs. Each therefore of the perſons invited, having preferred things temporal to things eternal, was juſtly condemned. *They that are after the fleſh do mind the things of the fleſh: but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. To be ſpiritually-minded is life and peace: to be carnally-minded is death* (c).

(c) Rom. viii. 6, 7.

My brethren! the parable which has been explained, while it affords an exact picture of the preſent ſtate of multitudes who profeſs themſelves to be Chriſtians, holds forth a ſolemn warning to all perſons, who are at this day endeavouring to make excuſes for denying to religion the empire of their hearts. If in tempers or in conduct you are an open tranſgreſſor of the goſpel; as ſurely as the word of God is true, you are in a ſtate of damnation. The gulf of deſtruction ſtares you in the face; and unleſs you repent and become a new man, will cloſe upon you for ever. But this parable, in conformity to many other paſſages in the New Teſtament teaches you the no leſs aweful leſſon; that you will be condemned at the day of judgement, if you ſuffer any one of the lawful occupations or lawful pleaſures of this life to be the principal object of your purſuit. Yet how frequently do we ſee people reſigning themſelves to ſuch idols; and find every argument ineffectual to convince them that they are in the direct road to eternal ruin. With ſome, wealth is the idol. They riſe up early, and go late to reſt, and eat the bread of carefulneſs, day after day, and year after year. Their minds are filled with plans for the improvement

of

of their ground, and the advantageous diſpoſal of its produce; or with ſchemes to draw cuſtomers to their compting-houſe or their ſhop, and to lay in their commodities at the cheapeſt rate; or to place out their money on the beſt ſecurity, and at the higheſt intereſt. At the end of every year they are become richer: but they are not become more religious. They have increaſed in poſſeſſions: but they have not grown in grace. They have accumulated ſubſtance on earth: but have not laid up treaſure in the ſight of God. During all this time they imagine that they are religious: and are even ready to profeſs a conviction that this ſcraping laborious life is one proof of religion. How hardening is the deceitfulneſs of ſin (*d*)! How darkening the influence of a worldly ſpirit! What ſpecious evidence have they to produce of their religion? Let their cauſe be exhibited in the moſt favourable light. They have not been ſpendthrifts. They have obſerved common honeſty in their dealings. They have ſeldom omitted their devotions at the returns of night and of morning. They have attended public worſhip, and even the ſacrament, with decent frequency. But let every perſon of this deſcription anſwer to himſelf a ſhort queſtion: Where has your

(*d*) Heb. iii. 13.

heart been fixed? On the next world, or on this? Your anſwer will tell you that, if you die in your preſent ſtate, your condemnation is certain and juſt. Others make pleaſures and amuſements their idols. They conceive that, becauſe they are under no pecuniary neceſſity of addicting themſelves to buſineſs, they need not diſappoint their inclinations. They do not mean, they profeſs, to live wickedly: but they think that they have a right to entertain themſelves. Amuſements accordingly conſtitute their leading purſuit. Hounds and horſes, or other ſports of the field; or public places and unprofitable viſiting and the indolent peruſal of trifling and uninſtructive books, take poſſeſſion of their time and their thoughts. The amuſements which each perſon ſelects for himſelf depend on his ſituation, and other accidental circumſtances. But of all ſuch perſons, amuſement, whatever ſhape it may aſſume, is the object. And becauſe they follow ſuch amuſements as are not in their own nature neceſſarily ſinful; and becauſe they are not regardleſs of the forms of devotion, and ſome other outward duties of religion; they flatter themſelves that they are ſufficiently good Chriſtians. But let ſuch perſons alſo be aſked: Where has your heart been fixed? Can you think that the life

which

which you have led has been to live unto God and unto Chriſt? Has your life been that of a perſon who ſeeks firſt the kingdom of God and his righteouſneſs? The perſons who were previouſly deſcribed periſh by the cares and the riches of the world. You periſh by its idleneſs and its pleaſures. Induſtry, grounded on Chriſtian motives, and governed by Chriſtian rules, is not only not a ſin, but an abſolute duty. Amuſements, innocent in their nature, and moderate in degree, are at proper times allowable. But if either the acquiſition of money, or the purſuit of amuſement, be the leading object of your thoughts and wiſhes, the ruling principle of your heart: ceaſe to imagine that you are religious; anticipate the condemnation which awaits you. I dwell not on other idols. What though power, and learning, and reputation, have alſo their worſhippers? Is the idolatry of another man a vindication of yours? God acknowledges none as his ſervants, except thoſe whoſe predominant deſire and delight is to promote his glory and obey his commandments. To no others does he promiſe pardon and grace and ſalvation through Jeſus Chriſt. Deceive yourſelf no longer. Lean no longer on a broken reed. Away with every excuſe for delaying to

reſign your whole heart to your Redeemer. Some excuſes may be more abſurd, ſome may be more preſumptuous, than others. But if you truſt to any excuſe whatever, you will fall into everlaſting condemnation.

SERMON X.

On Stedfaſtneſs in Obedience to God.

NUMBERS, xiv. 24.

But my Servant Caleb, becauſe he had another Spirit with him and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the Land.

THE children of Iſrael, about fifteen months after their departure from Egypt, were now arrived on the borders of the land of promiſe. Moſes, according to the command of God, ſent forth twelve choſen men, one from each tribe, to examine the country: and directed them to bring accurate information to their brethren, whether the ſoil was rich and fruitful, or lean and barren; whether the inhabitants were few and feeble, or numerous and warlike; whether they were

dwellers in tents, or in cities and ſtrong holds. The twelve ſpies, after having been engaged during forty days in executing the commiſſion, returned. They delivered a moſt favourable account of the fertility of the land of Canaan. They deſcribed it as indeed flowing with milk and honey. And among other ſpecimens of the luxuriance of its productions, they brought with them a cluſter of grapes ſo vaſt in ſize, that it was carried between two of them upon a ſtaff. But the remainder of their report filled the camp of Iſrael with alarm. They repreſented the people of Canaan as men of great ſtature, ſome of them even as giants, and as dwelling in very large and fortified cities. And ten of the ſpies vehemently diſſuaded the Iſraelites from attempting to enter the country; and averred that its inhabitants were far too mighty to be attacked by them with any hope of ſucceſs. The other two ſpies, Caleb and Joſhua, remained firm in dependence upon God. They proteſted againſt the impious cowardice of their aſſociates. They earneſtly entreated their countrymen not to rebel againſt the ordinance of the Lord, who had commanded them to go up and take poſſeſſion of the land; who had promiſed to beſtow it upon them and their children for ever; and who

who had proved himſelf able, by his former glorious deeds on their behalf, to crown them with victory over the moſt powerful enemies. Their entreaties and exhortations were thrown away. The congregation of Iſrael prepared to ſtone to death theſe faithful ſervants of the Moſt High. The divine indignation was awakened. God inſtantly deſtroyed the ten ſpies who had impelled the Iſraelites into tranſgreſſion: and pronounced this aweful ſentence on all among the rebellious congregation who had attained the age of twenty years, that they ſhould wander until they died in the wilderneſs, and ſhould never ſet their feet on the promiſed land. But to his ſervants Caleb and Joſhua, who had fully followed him in ſtedfaſt obedience, he repeated his gracious aſſurance, that they ſhould enter into the land and poſſeſs it.

The events, which on this occaſion took place in the hoſt of Iſrael, bear a ſtriking reſemblance to thoſe, which at the preſent day are frequently ſeen to occur on the ſubject of religion. We perceive numbers purſuing the example of the ten ſpies and their diſobedient countrymen. And ſome, through the bleſſing of God, we behold walking in the ſteps of Caleb and Joſhua. On the conduct of perſons of each of theſe two deſcriptions

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I propoſe ſeparately to offer ſome obſervations: and ſhall afterwards endeavour to furniſh you with the means of judging for yourſelves which of the two claſſes of men it will be your wiſdom to take for your pattern. May the divine grace render what you hear conducive to your edification!

I. Let me in the firſt place call your attention to a claſs of men very numerous in the world; men who allow that piety is commendable, and even profeſs that they are deſirous of paying what they term a reaſonable regard to religion: but, having no true love of holineſs in their hearts, are continually taking alarm at difficulties, and on the watch to raiſe objections. Obſerve how nearly the character and conduct of ſuch perſons reſemble thoſe of the ten ſpies. The ten ſpies acknowledged the excellence of the land which they had ſearched. They ſaid unto Moſes; *We came unto the land whither thou ſenteſt us, and ſurely it floweth with milk and honey: and this*, added they, while they pointed to the figs and the pomegranates and the wonderful cluſter of grapes, *this is the fruit of it.* So the profeſſed Chriſtians of whom we ſpeak are ready to ſay: "We know what religion "is; we have examined it, and we underſtand "it.

"it. We admit that the Scriptures are excel-
"lent books; and that the goſpel gives many
"admirable directions. We are fully of opi-
"nion that chriſtianity is well adapted to
"produce tranquillity and good order, and
"honeſty, and charitable actions, and other
"valuable fruits among men. And we doubt
"not that it ſecures great rewards in re-
"verſion to all who lead exemplary lives."
On the ſpiritual nature of true piety, on the intrinſic odiouſneſs of ſin, on the neceſſity of a radical change of heart, and on other diſtinguiſhing features of the *doctrine which is according to godlineſs*, ſuch perſons commonly are ſilent. They commend religion, as the ten ſpies commended the land of Canaan, loudly as to ſome particulars, but with various objections in reſerve: objections which in their caſe weigh, like thoſe of the ſpies, much more than all the ſubjects and circumſtances of their praiſe.

Neverthelefs, ſaid the ten ſpies, *Neverthelefs the land through which we have gone to ſearch it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof.* The heart now began to unfold itſelf. Their real diſpoſition began to produce its natural effects on their conduct. They had no ſure confidence in God. They placed no firm reliance on his promiſe of protection.

They had not that fervent love for him, which fills the boſom with a prevailing deſire to obey him. They ſecretly hankered after the fleſh-pots of Egypt: and did not regard the promiſed land with all its bleſſings as worthy of being purchaſed by the trouble and exertions, which were neceſſary in order to obtain it. Hence they looked around for objections, which might ſerve as excuſes for their own diſobedience, and might alſo deter their countrymen from making the attempt. They *brought up an evil report on the land which they had ſearched; ſaying, It is a land which eateth up the inhabitants thereof.* Thus the claſs of profeſſed Chriſtians now under conſideration, men whoſe deſire is to live not unto Chriſt, but unto themſelves; men who acknowledge the truth of the goſpel, but love not the doctrines which it reveals, and ſtill leſs the holineſs which it requires; ſuch men gladly try to ſhelter their breach of duty by bringing up an evil report on a life of godlineſs. "The ſervice of religion," they exclaim, "is a hard ſervice. It is a ſervice which wears "away and conſumes thoſe who engage in it." Again; the ſpies proceeded to ſet forth and to magnify the difficulties which muſt be ſuſtained, and the obſtacles which muſt be ſurmounted, previouſly to the day when the land

land of Canaan could be ſecured. *The people*, ſaid they, *be ſtrong, that dwell in the land: and the cities are walled and very great. We be not able to go up againſt the people; for they are ſtronger than we.* So theſe nominal Chriſtians eagerly bring forward unto notice, and heighten with every extravagance of exaggeration, the trials which attend a Chriſtian life. They deſcribe the temptations, againſt which the Chriſtian has to maintain a conflict, as almoſt irreſiſtible. "His duty," they cry, "is moſt ſevere; his watchfulneſs "unremitting; his labour extreme; his ſuc-"ceſs very doubtful, and in appearance nearly "hopeleſs." *And moreover*, continued the ſpies, *we ſaw the children of Anak there: there we ſaw the giants, the ſons of Anak which come of the giants.* "In addition too," exclaim the nominal Chriſtians, "to the hardſhips al-"ready enumerated as awaiting us in the "paths of religion; we there perceive thoſe "deteſted enemies of human happineſs, thoſe "objects of our abhorrence and our dread, "mortification and ſelf-denial. Who," they demand, in the language of St. Paul, but in a ſpirit directly oppoſite to that by which the apoſtle was governed; "Who is ſufficient "for theſe things?" Inwardly averſe to that righteouſneſs which the Scriptures enjoin; they

they ſtudiouſly repreſent it as unattainable, and labour to render it unacceptable. Intent on framing apologies for declining to devote themſelves to God; and ſolicitous to vindicate themſelves by the authority and ſupport of companions in ſin: they ſcruple not to delineate the Father of mercies as a hard Maſter; and his ſervice as difficult and toilſome beyond the ability of man, and therefore, as in forgetfulneſs or contempt of the promiſed grace of the Holy Spirit they blindly and preſumptuouſly pronounce, exceeding in its preſcribed extent the bounds of human duty.

II. *But my ſervant Caleb*, ſaith the Lord, *had another Spirit with him, and hath followed me fully.* He *ſtilled the people before Moſes, and ſaid*, together with Joſhua; *Let us go up at once and poſſeſs the land: for we are well able to overcome it. If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into the land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye againſt the Lord: neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us. Their defence is departed from them; and the Lord is with us. Fear them not.* Caleb had no apprehenſions; he looked not around for objections; he raiſed up no difficulties. And why? Becauſe *he followed the Lord*

Lord fully. He placed entire confidence in God. He knew that whatever God promiſed, he was able to perform. The ſtrong people that dwelt in the land, the cities walled and very great, the ſons of Anak who were giants, he regarded as nothing. He beheld with the eye of faith the Lord of hoſts going before him to battle, and caſting down all enemies under his feet. His heart was with his God. He delighted to obey the divine commands. *Only rebel not ye againſt the Lord.* This was his main deſire both for his countrymen and for himſelf. To the protection of the God whom he loved, he committed himſelf. Conſequences he left to Omnipotence. His own concern was duty. "All the labours, all the ſufferings, to which "it may pleaſe my heavenly King to ſummon "me, will be lightened by his never-failing "goodneſs, and will be abundantly overpaid "by his promiſed inheritance." His heart ſpoke thus; and was at reſt.

Through the grace of God, and it is through that grace alone, there are thoſe among the Chriſtians of our own days who are animated by the ſpirit of Caleb and of Joſhua. They follow the Lord fully. Religion is their choice; holineſs their delight. Thoroughly convinced of the truth of God,

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of the mercies of redemption, of the glories of the world to come; they heſitate not to encounter the toils of Chriſtian warfare. They are not ignorant of the ſtrength of their enemies. They are aware that it is far greater than it is imagined or repreſented to be by the worldly-minded men, who refuſe to encounter it. "We know," they reply to the deceivers who would perſuade them to ſhrink back from the courſe of duty; "we know that we have to contend with the "fleſh and the world; with the corruption of "our own hearts; with your evil cuſtoms, "your ſcoffs and your ſnares; with Satan and "his angels, the principalities and powers of "darkneſs. But we are ready to ſet the "battle in array. We are ready to go forth "in the name of our God. Mightier is he "that is with us than they that are againſt "us. His ſtrength is perfected in our weak-"neſs. His grace is ſufficient for us: and "is able to make us more than conquerors "through him that loved us, even through "Jeſus Chriſt."

III. You are now acquainted with the different ſpirit of two different claſſes of perſons to be found among modern Chriſtians. Which of the two do you judge to be the right? Which

of the two do you eſteem the wiſer? *Come and let us reaſon together* on this ſubject. The Iſraelites were directed to ſearch out and examine the land of Canaan by means of their ſpies, before they ſhould attempt to take poſſeſſion of it. In the ſame manner Chriſt admoniſhes thoſe, who are deſirous of becoming his diſciples, to *ſit down firſt and count the coſt* (*a*). Not that the Iſraelites were left at liberty in point of duty to chooſe and determine for themſelves whether they would proceed into Canaan, or not. Neither are you left at liberty in point of duty to determine for yourſelves whether you will be religious or not. The Iſraelites were commanded to proceed into Canaan, and you are commanded to be religious, under pain of the wrath of almighty God. Why then are you required to ſit down and count the coſt of being religious? For the ſame reaſon for which the Iſraelites were inſtructed to ſearch out the land of Canaan: namely, that through the promiſed aſſiſtance of him *from whom is the preparation of the heart* (*b*), you may prepare your minds beforehand for the taſk which you have to perform; and may thoroughly underſtand the greatneſs of the promiſed reward.

Do not imagine that I ſeek as it were to delude you into the ſervice of religion by

(*a*) Luke, xiv. 28—33. (*b*) Prov. xvi. 1.

repreſenting that ſervice as eaſy. Whatever may be the bleſſings, preſent or future, which it may hold forth; unqueſtionably it abounds with difficulties, and requires conſtant and laborious exertion. And what valuable purſuit is there which does not? But with reſpect to every valuable purſuit the deciſive queſtion is not whether difficulties and ſacrifices are to be expected: but whether there be ſolid ground for truſting that the difficulties and ſacrifices will be compenſated by the attainment of the object which you purſue. The huſbandman cheerfully gives up his time and eaſe, and ſubmits to watchfulneſs and hardſhip, in cultivating his fields: for he hopes for an ample retribution in the harveſt. The merchant commits his property to the winds and waves, traverſes the ocean, faces the viciſſitudes of climates, recoils not from fatigue and danger, from ſuſpenſe and anxiety: for he looks forward to a cargo, which ſhall abundantly remunerate his labours. Conſider whether the rewards, which religion enſures to her followers, are proportionate to the nature of the ſervice which ſhe demands.

What then are the difficulties and ſacrifices to which you muſt ſubmit, if you would be ſervants of religion? "There are *many* "things," you reply, "many things rooted "in our nature, and dear to fleſh and blood, "which

"which we muſt renounce." What muſt you renounce? "We muſt renounce our "evil paſſions; as pride, anger, fretfulneſs, "envy, revenge." And is this a grievous ſacrifice? Will anger make you happy? Will fretfulneſs make you happy? Will pride, or envy, or revenge, make you happy? When you have indulged any of theſe wicked tempers, does the recollection of them diffuſe comfort over your boſom? Can you ſeriouſly ſay; "As I wiſh to be happy to-morrow, I "therefore hope that to-morrow I ſhall be "actuated by paſſion, that I ſhall be fretful, "and proud, and envious, and revengeful?" Can you ſeriouſly ſay, that you believe men of ſuch diſpoſitions to be more happy than thoſe, whom religion has rendered mild, contented, humble, rejoicing in the proſperity of others, replete with kindneſs, compaſſion, and forgiveneſs? Your own hearts tell you that the real ſacrifice is not to renounce theſe tempers, but to retain them: that their ſervice, not that of religion, is the hard ſervice.

Let us proceed in our examination. What more does religion require you to renounce? "She requires us to renounce intemperance, "and other ſenſual pleaſures." And are theſe grievous ſacrifices? Compare the gratification

which the ſinner obtains from his brutal indulgences with the preſent bleſſings which he loſes by them. Take drunkenneſs for an example. Does the drunkard derive as large an amount of pleaſure from drunkenneſs, as the temperate man from temperance? Contemplate the drunkard drenching himſelf in the poiſon which is ſecretly deſtroying him; roaring out curſes in the midſt of companions like himſelf; and joining in their profane ſongs and licentious merriment. Follow him to his home, to the wife and children whom perhaps he ſtarves: ſee them terrified by his fury, or ſunk in anguiſh by his guilt. Viſit him the ſucceeding morning. Behold his reddened eyes, his bloated viſage, his trembling hands, his liſtleſs and languid frame. Behold him racked with remorſe for the ſins of the paſt evening; or in a ſtate infinitely more pitiable, utterly inſenſible of them, and prepared for the next opportunity of repeating his crime. Now turn to the man whom religion renders temperate. Obſerve his ſerene brow, the emblem of a peaceful boſom. Mark the healthineſs of his countenance, the alacrity of his ſtep. See him preſſing forward with cheerful induſtry the buſineſs of the day. See his family in tranquillity, and comfort, and harmony around him.

him. Judge for yourſelf, whether the ſon of temperance or the drunkard be the happier man. Compare thus in detail the man who abandons himſelf to any other unlawful gratification with his neighbour whom the fear of God preſerves from that ſin: and the concluſion will be no leſs clearly in favour of religion. You will again diſcover that to be wicked requires the real ſacrifice; that the hard ſervice is the ſervice of guilt.

What more have you to object to the ways of religion? "We are commanded to believe "every doctrine which is declared in the "ſcriptures; and to practiſe every duty "which they enjoin." And do you place theſe obligations in the catalogue of hardſhips? Is it a hardſhip to believe the word of the God of truth? Is it a hardſhip to obey the commandments of a wiſe and holy and merciful Father: commandments all of them of ſuch a nature that, as you have already been conſtrained to acknowledge, in proportion to your obedience to them will be your preſent happineſs? "But our aſſent is re-"quired to doctrines which we cannot fa-"thom." Can you explain the growth of a blade of graſs? Do you expect then to fathom the nature and the counſels of the Godhead? "But religion makes no allowances.

"She proſcribes even little and venial ſins." Whence have you learned that any ſin is little? Whence have you learned that any act of rebellion againſt God is venial? Do human laws allow petty theſts, petty frauds, petty outrages? Do not you know that petty thefts, if unchaſtiſed, advance to burglaries, petty frauds to forgeries, petty outrages to murder? How ſhall religion ſecure you from the blackeſt enormities otherwiſe than by prohibiting the firſt rudiments of guilt? How ſhall the perfect holineſs of the Deity tolerate the ſlighteſt infraction of his righteous law? "But Chriſtianity calls us to conſtant watchfulneſs and prayer!" Thoſe duties then you account hardſhips! You account it a hardſhip to be obliged conſtantly to watch againſt ſins, which you know will make you miſerable even in this world: and a hardſhip to be required to be conſtant in prayer to God, by whom alone your watchfulneſs can be rendered ſucceſsful, from whom alone flows every bleſſing which you enjoy. Theſe duties, did you poſſeſs any true wiſdom, you would range among your bleſſings. Would you be preſerved from the deepeſt ſnares and the ſtrongeſt chains of iniquity? Watchfulneſs againſt temptation is indiſpenſable. Prayer, more eſpecially, is your moſt valuable

valuable privilege. For, though a religious life brings no hardſhips; it is attended with difficulties naturally inſurmountable by man. It is an unceaſing ſtruggle againſt ſin and the author of ſin. It is a continual mortification of corrupt appetites, a conſtant denial of ſelfiſh paſſions. It is a warfare to which of yourſelves you are utterly unequal. How great a bleſſing is it to be permitted at all times to apply by prayer to that almighty Protector, who alone can give you the victory, who is ever ready to hear the ſupplications of his people!

Thus then is it evident that the region of guilt is *the land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof.* Thus is it evident, on a juſt compariſon, that *godlineſs has the promiſe of the life which now is.* How much more has it the excluſive promiſe of *that which is to come* (*c*)! Here you behold the grand ſuperiority of religion. Here you behold the everlaſting triumph of the righteous. However diſtreſſed may be his ſituation in this world; however real and however great may be the ſacrifices, however continual and ſevere the mortification and ſelf-denial, to which religion binds him to ſubmit; he repoſes with full confidence on his God. He

(*c*) 1 Tim. iv. 8.

looks forward beyond the grave; and exclaims with the apoſtle, *My light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work for me an exceeding and eternal weight of glory* (*d*). He knows that, as long as he remains in the fleſh, he is liable to fall; that if he forſakes his Redeemer he ſhall be a caſt-away. But he walks humbly with his God, and therefore leans upon his mercy: he keeps his holy commandments, and therefore relies upon the continuance of his preſerving grace. Would you attain to theſe glorious hopes, before which the world and its brighteſt proſpects fade away: to this peace of ſoul, the delight of which they only who have felt it can comprehend? Follow the Lord fully. Remember the example of the rebellious Iſraelites who liſtened to the ten unfaithful ſpies, and that of the two ſtedfaſt followers of God. *As truly as I live, ſaith the Lord, I will ſurely do it unto all this evil congregation that are gathered together againſt me: in this wilderneſs they ſhall be conſumed, and there they ſhall die. As truly as I live, ſo will I do to you who have murmured againſt me. Your carcaſes ſhall fall in this wilderneſs. Doubtleſs ye ſhall not come into the land, ſave Caleb and Joſhua. My ſervant Caleb, becauſe he had*

(*d*) 2 Cor. iv. 17.

another

another ſpirit with him, and hath followed me fully; him will I bring into the land. The decree was punctually fulfilled. The ten ſpies were inſtantly ſtruck with death. The whole rebellious congregation, one man after another, was conſumed in the courſe of nearly forty years ſpent in wanderings in the wilderneſs. But after the expiration of that period their children and deſcendents, under the command of Joſhua who was aſſiſted by his faithful friend Caleb, entered the land of Canaan and took poſſeſſion of it. They believed in God: and he drove out and deſtroyed their enemies.

"But was not Caleb," you enquire, "by "this time declining into the vale of years, "and incapable of enjoying the promiſed "heritage?" When God promiſes, fear not leſt the performance ſhould prove deluſion. Hear this ſtedfaſt ſervant of the Lord, when he had now employed ſeveral years after his arrival in Canaan in combats for the eſtabliſhment of his brethren in their allotments, ſtating his own claim before Joſhua. *Thou knoweſt the thing that the Lord ſaid unto Moſes, the man of God, concerning me and thee in Kadeſhbarnea. And Moſes ſware on that day, ſaying; Surely the land whereon thy feet have trodden ſhall be thine inheritance, and thy children's*

dren's for ever: becauſe thou haſt wholly followed the Lord thy God. And now, behold, the Lord hath kept me alive, as he ſaid, theſe forty and five years, even ſince the Lord ſpake this word unto Moſes, while the children of Iſrael wandered in the wilderneſs. And now, lo, I am this day fourſcore and five years old. As yet I am as ſtrong this day as I was in the day that Moſes ſent me: as my ſtrength was then, even ſo is my ſtrength now for war. Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the Lord ſpake in that day (for thou heardeſt in that day how the Anakims were there, and that the cities were great and fenced): if the Lord will be with me, then I ſhall be able to drive them out, as the Lord ſaid. And Joſhua bleſſed him (*e*): and according to the promiſe of Moſes aſſigned to him the mountain and city of Hebron, which were inhabited by thoſe giants, the ſons of Anak, at the name of whom the whole congregation of Iſrael had trembled: and the Lord was with Caleb; and he utterly deſtroyed them. The words of the Lord will be fulfilled as punctually with reſpect to you. The wicked *ſhall go away into everlaſting puniſhment; but the righteous into life eternal* (*f*). If the goſpel is preached to you in vain; if your lives are not lives of

(*e*) Joſhua, xiv. 6—14. xv. 13, 14. (*f*) Matt. xxv. 46.

faith

faith and holineſs through Chriſt: you will periſh everlaſtingly, where the worm dieth not and the fire is never quenched. *Theſe are the true ſayings of God.* If you have *another ſpirit* with you, even that new ſpirit which is created in the heart by the eternal Spirit of ſanctification; if you *follow the Lord fully*, in godlineſs, and humility, and prayer, and perſeverance unto the end: the inheritance of the ſpiritual Canaan, the kingdom of heaven, will be yours, by the blood of Jeſus, for ever.

Aug. 1802

SERMON XI.

On the Character of Naaman.

2 KINGS, V. 2, 3.

The Syrians had gone out by Companies, and had brought away captive out of Iſrael a little Maid; and ſhe waited on Naaman's Wife. And ſhe ſaid unto her Miſtreſs; Would God my Lord were with the Prophet that is in Samaria: for he would recover him of his Leproſy!

THAT the name of God might be glorified among the heathen was one of the leading purpoſes, for the furtherance of which the children of Iſrael were ſelected to become a peculiar people to the Moſt High. In the victories which from age to age have attended the ſtandard of the croſs, this plan of mercy has advanced many ſteps towards its completion. In the univerſal triumphs which await Chriſtianity, when the converſion and reeſtabliſh-

eſtabliſhment of the Jews ſhall bring the fulneſs of the Gentiles into the church, it will receive its perfect accompliſhment. But during the whole period of the Moſaic covenant; from the day when the magicians ſaid unto Pharaoh, *This is the finger of God*, to the moment when the Roman centurion exclaimed, *Truly this Man was the Son of God:* the deliverances miraculouſly wrought amidſt the choſen race ſhook ſucceſſive kingdoms and generations of unbelievers with terror; and concurred with the conſpicuous purity of the Jewiſh religion to extort from reluctant idolaters the tribute of praiſe to Jehovah.

In the narrative of which the portion of Scripture already recited forms a part, we perceive the Omnipotent gaining to himſelf from among the heathen an acquiſition which his mercy never deſpiſes, the acquiſition of a faithful worſhipper. I propoſe, in the firſt place, to ſtate and briefly to illuſtrate the circumſtances of the tranſaction: and, in the ſecond place, to point out ſome of the methods, in which we may derive benefit from the conſideration of them.

I. The kingdom of Syria bordered upon Iſrael. In conſequence of diſputes reſpecting their boundaries and various other cauſes, there aroſe

aroſe frequent wars between the two nations. About the time of which we are ſpeaking, ſome troops of Syrians had effected a ſucceſsful incurſion into the land of Iſrael: and, according to the cruel cuſtom of thoſe days, had carried back with them into captivity ſuch of the inhabitants as they had been able to ſeize. Among them was a young woman, who became a ſervant in the family of Naaman. Naaman was captain of the hoſt, general of the whole army, of the king of Syria. *He was a mighty man in valour. He was alſo a great man with his maſter, and honourable; becauſe by him the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria.* But in the midſt of his grandeur and high renown, he was ſubjected to a very ſevere affliction. He was infected with the leproſy; a loathſome diſorder not uncommon in the eaſt. The Iſraelitiſh maiden felt compaſſion for his diſtreſs. Her mind, fondly reverting to her native ſoil, dwelt on the wonderful works which God had there wrought by the hand of Eliſha. She thought that this miniſter of heaven, on whoſe prayer the ſon of the Shunamite had been reſtored to life, would be enabled to heal the diſeaſe of her maſter. *She ſaid unto her miſtreſs; Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria: for he would recover him of his leproſy.*

leproſy. Naaman was informed of her expreſſions: and ſpeedily commencing his journey to Samaria, conveyed with him for the prophet a preſent of immenſe value; and a letter from the king of Syria to the king of Iſrael deſiring, in authoritative language, that Naaman might be healed. The king of Iſrael peruſed the letter with aſtoniſhment and alarm. *He rent his clothes, and ſaid, Am I God, to kill and to make alive; that this man doth ſend unto me to recover a man of his leproſy?* And he concluded that the purpoſe of the Syrian monarch was to ſeek a pretence for quarrelling and entering into war with him. When Eliſha heard the news, he reproved the king of Iſrael for yielding to fear, inſtead of humbly confiding in God, who was ready to protect all that put their truſt in him; and had even then raiſed up a prophet in Samaria able to cure the leper. *Let Naaman*, he added, *come unto me: and he ſhall know that there is a prophet in Iſrael.* Naaman accordingly proceeded with his chariot and attendants to the door of Eliſha: and there received a meſſage from the prophet, directing him to go and waſh himſelf ſeven times in the river Jordan, and aſſuring him that his leproſy ſhould thus be immediately removed. The haughtineſs of Naaman burſt

into open fury, when he heard the meſſage. He inſtantly departed. He conſidered the river Jordan as utterly contemptible in compariſon of the rivers of his own country. He expected too that the prophet ſhould inſtantly have appeared before him with ceremonious deference: and that he ſhould have performed the cure publicly in the ſight of the people, and in a manner calculated to render the higheſt honour to ſo great a man as the captain of the hoſt of the king of Syria. *Naaman was wroth, and went away, and ſaid; Behold I thought, he will ſurely come out to me, and ſtand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and ſtrike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damaſcus, better than all the waters of Iſrael? May I not waſh in them, and be clean? So he turned, and went away in a rage.* Happy was it for him that he had ſome attendants of a ſpirit different from his own. *They came near, and ſaid unto him; My father, if the prophet had bid thee do ſome great thing: wouldeſt thou not have done it? How much rather then, when he ſaith; Waſh and be clean?* Here was the language of reaſon and kindneſs. The language of reaſon unaccompanied by kindneſs will often fail of making an impreſſion. It has no ef-

fect on the underſtanding, becauſe it touches not the heart. The language of kindneſs unaſſociated with reaſon, will frequently be unable to perſuade: becauſe though it may gain upon the affections, it wants that which is neceſſary to convince the judgement. But let reaſon and kindneſs be united in your diſcourſe; and ſeldom will even pride or prejudice continue to reſiſt. Thus it was with Naaman. His pride and prejudices yielded at once. He went forward to the river Jordan; dipped himſelf ſeven times; and aſcended out of the water perfectly healed of his diſeaſe. He haſtened back to the prophet in the fervor of gratitude and piety. He was eager to load Eliſha with coſtly gifts. But Eliſha ought not, by healing Naaman to enrich himſelf. His object was to promote the glory of God. Urged again and again with the moſt importunate earneſtneſs, he ſteadily refuſed to receive a reward. Naaman avowed his conviction that the God of Iſrael was the God of all the earth: and ſolemnly proteſted that from that moment he renounced the worſhip of idols, and would adore the true God alone. He returned into Syria completely changed not in outward appearance merely, but in heart.

II. I proceed to explain in ſome of its branches the inſtruction to be deduced from the hiſtory of Naaman.

1. The power of the Deity is conſpicuouſly exalted, when He accompliſhes his gracious purpoſes by means which are undervalued or deſpiſed. Naaman for a time would not bear the idea that a river in the land of Iſrael, a land which he beheld with ſcorn, a land which he probably had trampled down at the head of his victorious hoſt, could be the inſtrument by which God would remove his leproſy. Does the New Teſtament ſupply no parallel? When Chriſt appeared on earth to ſave mankind by his atoning death and by his ſanctifying doctrine; all the world took offence at him. To the Jews, he was a ſtumbling-block; to the Greeks fooliſhneſs. The Jews expected their Redeemer to manifeſt himſelf in worldly magnificence and grandeur; to place himſelf in triumph on the throne of David in Jeruſalem; and to render the people of Iſrael the glory and the dread of the whole earth. A Saviour who was found in the humbleſt rank of life; who diſclaimed all human dignity and power; who ſubmitted to be treated as a malefactor, to be put to death upon the croſs; they were

too proud and too ignorant to acknowledge. *Is not this the Carpenter, the ſon of Mary? Can any good thing come out of Nazareth* (*a*)? The Greeks had fixed their hearts on what they denominated wiſdom. They deſpiſed all doctrines which were not diſtinguiſhed by intricate, refined, and diſputatious learning, and decorated with a parade of eloquence. The ſimple, pure, and holy goſpel of Chriſt they regarded as unworthy of the notice of informed and cultivated minds. Are humility and diſcernment univerſal among ourſelves? Even in our own days, the divine authority of our crucified Lord is by many perſons ſcornfully decried; and the righteous inſtructions and commandments which he delivered are repreſented by blind and preſumptuous ſinners as poſſeſſing no particular merit, and in ſome reſpects as hard, unreaſonable, and pernicious. To ſuch ſcoffers what ſhall be our reply? We reply to them in the words addreſſed by Chriſt to the unbelieving Jews: *Wiſdom is juſtified of all her children* (*b*). They who underſtand the Chriſtian plan of ſalvation, they perceive it to be the power of God, and the wiſdom of God.

2. Obſerve, ſecondly, that if there be any bleſſing which you are deſirous of obtaining

(*a*) Mark, vi. 3. John, i. 46. (*b*) Luke, vii. 35.

from the hand of God, it muſt be ſought in the manner which he enjoins. If you ſeek but the ſmalleſt of his gifts; purſue the appointed track: turn not aſide to the right hand nor to the left. Would you atchieve the greateſt, even ſalvation? Seek it through that channel which he has ordained. You cannot attain it through any other. The mercy of God will be exerciſed, the grace of God will be beſtowed, in his own method, and in that only. If you will not accept his bounty in the way and under the qualifications which he propoſes; you never will obtain it. Could not the Omnipotent have removed the leproſy of Naaman by various means? But the waters of Jordan were the inſtrument which he thought fit to appoint. If Naaman had obſtinately perſevered in refuſing to make uſe of them; he never would have been healed. He might have bathed in Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damaſcus of which he ſo highly boaſted: he might have conſulted the moſt ſkilful phyſicians: he might have applied the moſt celebrated remedies: he might have practiſed every method which his imagination could deviſe for the recovery of his health: and all would have been entirely in vain. He would have remained a diſtempered and a miſerable

object, grievous to himſelf, and offenſive to others: he would have gone down to his grave a leper as white as ſnow. If you wiſh to be ſaved; remember that you can be ſaved only through Chriſt. There is ſalvation in no other. And, if you would be ſaved through him; remember that he will be no Saviour to you, unleſs through the grace of God it be your conſtant ſtudy and endeavour to believe what he has commanded you to believe, and to practiſe what he has commanded you to practiſe. It is a very afflicting and a very alarming truth, that in moſt congregations there are many profeſſed Chriſtians, who will not take Chriſtianity as they find it in the Scriptures. Puffed up with ſelf-righteouſneſs, or proudly confiding in their own imaginations and reaſonings, they ſhut their eyes againſt the plaineſt declarations of Jeſus Chriſt: and frame to themſelves ſuch ideas of the divine method of ſalvation as the goſpel not only does not authoriſe, but poſitively contradicts. Some men become arrogant and daring enough to think that they have but little occaſion for the atoning blood and mediation of Chriſt: that their lives have been in the main ſufficiently good: and that if God were not to admit them into the glories of heaven, their excluſion would

ſcarcely be leſs than partiality and injuſtice. Others, who have not ſo far loſt the ſenſe of their own radical guilt and deep unworthineſs, take the goſpel piecemeal. They would be ſurpriſed and offended, were any doubt expreſſed as to their reverence of the Scriptures. But what is the method in which ſuch a perſon treats the Scriptures? Some parts he perceives to accord with the opinions which he has formed concerning the duties of religion. Thoſe he mentions with reſpect. Other parts he diſcovers to be in a certain degree at variance with his private ſentiments and prepoſſeſſions. Of them he ſpeaks with leſs regard. "Theſe things," he remarks, "may "prove thus, or they may not. It is a very "doubtful matter. It is probable that we "miſunderſtand the paſſage; and that the "true meaning is very different from that "which is commonly aſſumed." But as to other paſſages, which are abſolutely irreconcilable with ſome favourite prejudice of his own, he uſes no ceremony or moderation. "This," he pronounces at once, "cannot be. "This precept is intolerable. To follow this "direction is impoſſible: and to attempt to "follow it would not only be ineffectual, but "would be to expoſe myſelf to continual "diſadvantages, mortification, and ridicule.

"It

"It clearly was never intended that in the "present ſtate of the world we ſhould ob- "ſerve theſe rules. At leaſt it is very evi- "dent that we need not be at all ſtrict as to "the obſervance of them." He proceeds in the ſame manner with reſpect to doctrines; and ſuch as do not ſatisfy his preconceptions, and coincide with his theories, he makes no ſcru- ple of neglecting, nor of explaining away, nor even of openly denying. Now one part of the character of a good man, as it is delineated in the Scriptures, is to walk humbly with his God. Do ſuch perſons walk humbly with their God? Is not their conduct the counter- part of that of Naaman, while his mind was enſlaved by pride? A part of the meaſures neceſſary for his cure he was willing to adopt. He did not heſitate to undertake a journey as far as Samaria to the prophet. But when he was directed to proceed to the river Jordan, and waſh himſelf in the ſtream; he imme- diately rebelled. He thought the direction unreaſonable, abſurd, and degrading; and re- fuſed to pay any regard to it. My brethren! Be aſſured that the whole of the Scriptures is the word of God. If it is your duty to obey one part, it is your duty to obey every part. And thoſe perſons who preſumptuouſly take upon themſelves to ſeparate what God has

joined together; to detach and ſelect from the ſacred writings ſome doctrines, and ſome precepts, as proper to be received, and to reject others as unworthy of God and not deſigned to be binding upon man; are in the utmoſt danger of finding themſelves at the day of judgement as fatally diſappointed of ſalvation, as Naaman would have found himſelf diſappointed of a cure, if he had perſevered in refuſing to depart and dip himſelf ſeven times in Jordan.

3. Receive inſtruction, in the next place, from the unfeigned repentance, and pious gratitude of Naaman. He came in haſte from the river, and preſented himſelf before the prophet. He openly acknowledged that there was no God but the God of Iſrael. He ſolemnly renounced the idolatrous worſhip to which he had been accuſtomed; and declared that from that moment he would adore the true God, and Him only. He who had ſo lately regarded with contempt all the waters of Canaan; now humbly requeſted permiſſion to carry back with him into his own country two mules' burthen of earth from the land of Iſrael, that he might raiſe with it in Syria an altar to Jehovah. You have inherited a corrupt nature, infected with a diſeaſe far more loathſome, far more dangerous, than

that

that of Naaman; infected with ſin, the leproſy of the heart. How may you be preſerved from the mortal effects of your malady? By one method only: by a method analogous to that by which Naaman was healed: by flying for help to the great prophet of Iſrael, Jeſus Chriſt the Lord. He has opened in his goſpel a fountain for the waſhing away of guilt. He has made atonement for ſin by the ſhedding of his own blood. He promiſes pardon to every penitent. He promiſes to his followers the aid of all ſufficient grace. He invites, he exhorts you to accept deliverance, to be cleanſed, to be made whole. Have you hitherto deſpiſed the call? Naaman gave ear to the counſel of his ſervants. *We are ourſelves your ſervants for Jeſus's ſake. Now then we are ambaſſadors for Chriſt, as though God did beſeech you by us. We pray you in Chriſt's ſtead; be ye reconciled to God* (*c*). Or do you profeſs that you have already liſtened to your Saviour's voice, and known the riches of his redeeming love? *We beſeech you then that ye receive not the grace of God in vain* (*d*). The change in Naaman was total. And what ſaith the apoſtle? *If any man be in Chriſt, he is a new creature. Old things are paſſed away: behold,*

(*c*) 2 Cor. iv. 5. v. 20. (*d*) 2 Cor. vi. 1.

all

all things are become new (*e*). Art thou, like Naaman, purified from unbelief, from pride, from hardneſs of heart? Haſt thou renounced, like Naaman, thy former idols? Like Naaman, haſt thou dedicated thyſelf to the living God? Like Naaman, doſt thou reſpect and love thoſe objects, which heretofore thou contemnedſt; the commands of God, the ordinances of God, the altar of God, the ſervants of God? If thou wouldeſt know thy real ſtate, turn not away from ſearching queſtions. Does conſcience conſtrain thee to ſilence? Does thy heart ſecretly delight in the purſuits of the old Adam? This Syrian ſhall riſe up in the day of judgement and ſhall condemn thee. The leproſy ſtill cleaveth unto thee. Fly to *the fountain of living waters, the fountain that is opened for ſin and uncleanneſs, the fountain that cometh forth of the houſe of the Lord* (*f*); leſt thy leproſy cleave unto thee for ever.

4. Finally, let Naaman admoniſh you to tenderneſs of conſcience. *In this thing the Lord pardon thy ſervant; that when my maſter goeth into the houſe of Rimmon to worſhip there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myſelf in the houſe of Rimmon; when I bow*

(*e*) 2 Cor. v. 17. (*f*) Jer. ii. 13. Joel, iii. 18. Zech. xiii. 1.

down

down myſelf in the houſe of Rimmon, the Lord pardon thy ſervant in this thing.

It is not a little ſingular, that theſe words of Naaman, which originated in a ſcrupulous deſire to avoid every degree of offence againſt God, ſhould have been interpreted into an application for a licenſe to commit idolatry. It is ſtill more extraordinary that the reply of Eliſha, *Go in peace*, ſhould have been regarded as an aſſent to ſuch a requeſt. As though the Syrian convert, who in the preceding moment had ſolemnly declared that he knew that there was no God in all the earth but in Iſrael; who had ſpontaneouſly averred that he would thenceforth offer neither burnt-offering nor ſacrifice unto other gods, but unto Jehovah alone; would inſtantly ſolicit permiſſion to worſhip an idol! As though the prophet of the Moſt High would have been ſeduced from his allegiance by a worldly fear of dealing too ſtrictly with ſo recent and ſo dignified a proſelyte, to countenance and ſanction a crime which it was the object of his life to oppoſe (*g*)! As though he would not inſtantly have replied: *Thy heart is not right in the ſight of God.*

(*g*) See in particular the indignant boldneſs with which he reproved his own idolatrous ſovereign. 2 Kings, iii. 1. 3. 13, 14.

What

What fellowſhip hath righteouſneſs with unrighteouſneſs? What communion hath light with darkneſs? What agreement hath God with idols? Repent therefore of this thy wickedneſs; and pray to God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee (*b*). The commiſſion of idolatry entered not into the imagination of Naaman or of Eliſha. The office which Naaman held in his own country, required that at certain ſeaſons he ſhould attend his maſter to the Temple of the Syrian deity Rimmon. On thoſe occaſions the king *leaned upon Naaman.* This apparently trifling circumſtance is recorded, we preſume, as an explanation of the whole tranſaction. How could the king bow down before his god, unleſs Naaman, on whom he leaned, ſhould bend himſelf forward alſo? But when Naaman had diſcontinued his former ſacrifice to Rimmon, and to every other idol; when he publickly profeſſed another faith, the excluſive belief of another God; when he publickly offered up his ſacrifices to Jehovah on the altar conſtructed with the ſoil, which he had openly brought for that eſpecial purpoſe from the land of Iſrael: was it poſſible that the act of his bending forward merely in avowed accommodation to his maſter, who

(*b*) Acts, viii. 21, 22. 2 Cor. vi. 14—16.

leaned

leaned upon him, could be deemed an act of homage to Rimmon, a participation in the crime of idolatry? Naaman, however, was not without apprehenſions that it might not be lawful on any account, and under any circumſtances, to adopt in the temple of an idol a poſture ſimilar to that, which others employed as a ſign of reverence. And while he expreſſed his hopes that the proceeding which he had deſcribed would not be offenſive to God; he expreſſed them with enquiring ſolicitude, and with evident tokens of deference to the prophet's expected determination.

Whatſoever, ſaith the apoſtle, *is not of faith*, whatſoever is performed without a full perſuaſion of its lawfulneſs, *is ſin* (*i*). If you are duly ſolicitous to preſerve a conſcience void of offence towards God and towards man; you will turn an inquiſitive eye on your general conduct, and eſpecially on thoſe parts of your proceedings which may bear the appearance of evil. The ſelf-righteous feel no ſcruples: the careleſs examine none. The former have no diffidence; the latter no ſpirit of inveſtigation. But the man of the truly Chriſtian temper is the *man who feareth always*: the man who, becauſe he

(*i*) Rom. xiv. 23.

feareth

feareth always, in the word of God is pronounced *happy* (*j*): the man who, because he feareth always the corruption of his own heart and the deceitfulneſs of ſin, ſcrutiniſes his motives, his tempers, his actions, his objects: is ſuſpicious of being biaſſed in his judgement of right and wrong by prepoſſeſſions, by inclination, by cuſtom, by intereſt, by a deſire to pleaſe men, by erroneous expectations of forwarding the glory of God: and being forewarned by the remembrance of paſt incautiouſneſs, of paſt miſtakes, of paſt tranſgreſſions, proceeds not with careleſs precipitation, decides not according to firſt appearances, but ſtrictly examines his purpoſes on every ſide, weighs them in the balance of the ſanctuary, meaſures them by the ſtandard of righteouſneſs, notes every defect, every aberration; and changes his plans and deſiſts from his undertakings, when he can no longer lay his hand on his boſom, and affirm according to the complete import of the apoſtolical injunction; "In my mind, O Lord, I am fully perſuaded "of their rectitude (*k*)." Such, in proportion to the degree of knowledge attained by a convert juſt emerging from idolatry, was the ſpirit of Naaman. Thou, who haſt

(*j*) Prov. xxviii. 14. (*k*) Rom. xiv. 5.

been

been nurſed up from thy cradle in the arms of Chriſtianity! Is not ſuch thy ſpirit? Then ſhall this Syrian riſe up in the day of judgement, and ſhall condemn thee. *They ſhall come from the Eaſt and from the Weſt, and from the North and from the South, and ſhall ſit down in the kingdom of God. But the children of the kingdom ſhall be caſt into outer darkneſs* (*l*). There are thoſe, ſaith the Scripture, whoſe conſciences are *evil* (*m*). There are thoſe, whoſe conſciences are *defiled* (*n*). There are thoſe, whoſe conſciences are *ſeared with a hot iron* (*o*). What is the firſt ſtep towards a conſcience that is evil, a conſcience that is defiled, a conſcience that is ſeared? A careleſs conſcience. *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments* (*p*). If thou wilt keep the commandments, *exerciſe* thyſelf *to have always a conſcience void of offence* (*q*). Exerciſe thy conſcience in a ſcrupulous inveſtigation of duty; train it to a quick perception and a lively abhorrence of guilt; if thou wouldeſt *walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameleſs* (*r*).

(*l*) Matt. viii. 11. Luke, xiii. 29. (*m*) Hebr. x. 22.
(*n*) Tit. i. 15. (*o*) 1 Tim. iv. 2. (*p*) Matt. xix. 17.
(*q*) Acts, xxiv. 16. (*r*) Luke, i. 6.

SERMON XII.

On habitual Remembrance of God.

PSALM xvi. 8.

I have ſet the Lord always before me. Becauſe he is at my right Hand, I ſhall not be moved.

SUCCESS is not the reward of inconſtant aims and deſultory efforts. When the mind is divided, we loſe ſight of our object. When exertion is interrupted, we recede from it. It is the part of wiſdom to ſelect from the various objects preſented to her choice that which is the moſt worthy of regard; to hold it ſtedfaſtly in view; to cheriſh the impreſſion of its excellence; to ſacrifice to it all inferior gratifications; to purſue it with firmneſs, with ardour, with unabating perſeverance.

In

In the paſſage of holy writ which has been recited, the Pſalmiſt directs your thoughts to the greateſt of all beings, the ſource of all happineſs. By the weight of his own example, by the reſult of his own experience, he admoniſhes you to an habitual remembrance of God. Of the prophetic import of the paſſage; of its ultimate and its moſt important reference to that deſcendent of David, who alone among all the generations of men kept completely and invariably before his eyes the preſence of his Almighty Father; I ſpeak not now. Contemplate the words in their primary acceptation. Contemplate them as deſcriptive of that predominant deſire of the heart of David, which he fervently expreſſes in almoſt every pſalm: a deſire which, notwithſtanding occaſional infirmities and one moſt ſignal ſcene of tranſgreſſion impartially recorded in the ſcriptures, is proved by the extraordinary commendations beſtowed upon him in the ſacred writings to have brought forth, through the influence of divine grace, the fruits of faith and holineſs in his general conduct, and deep ſelf-abhorrence and genuine repentance for the guilt into which he was betrayed. What was that deſire? To ſet the Lord his God always before him. What was his recompence? That God was on his

right hand as his guardian and friend: that God gave him full aſſurance that he ſhould not be moved.

I. Let us, in the firſt place, enquire what it is to ſet God always before us.

Repreſent to yourſelf the proceedings of men, who have propoſed to themſelves as their main purſuit the poſſeſſion of ſome worldly attainment. Obſerve in what manner they ſet their object, be it what it may, always before their eyes. Contemplate the votary of ſcience. Behold him abſorbed in laborious reſearches: in the inveſtigation of cauſes and effects; in the conſtruction of theories, and the explanation of the phenomena of nature. Behold him day after day bending all the powers of his mind to the invention and application of mechaniſm; to the arrangement and ſuperintendence of experiments; to the developement and illuſtration of philoſophical truth. At home and abroad; in cities and in the fields; in ſolitude and in ſociety; behold him ſteadily bearing in mind the object, to which he has dedicated his life. Survey the votary of ambition. Behold every nerve, every faculty, upon the ſtretch to ſupplant to undermine or to ſurpaſs his rivals, and to attain the dizzy

pre-eminence to which he aſpires. Mark the votary of intereſt. Behold him toiling early and late; ſelf-immured in a contracted abode; breathing the unhealthy atmoſphere of crowded ſtreets; and in his eagerneſs to accumulate additional wealth, denying himſelf the enjoyment of that which he poſſeſſes. Follow the votary of fame. Behold him careleſs of repoſe, patient of fatigue, fearleſs of death. Behold him indifferent to ſeaſons to climates and to dangers, croſſing continents, traverſing oceans, facing the bayonet, ſtorming the breach. Widely as theſe men differ, each from the other, as to their purſuits; in the leading principle of their conduct they are perfectly united. The heart of every man is fixed upon his object. His object is ever before his eyes. To his object his time is appropriated; his faculties are devoted; his indulgences are ſacrificed; his plans are made ſubſervient. *The children of this world, are in their generation wiſer than the children of light* (*a*). Whoſoever thou art, who haſt choſen the favour of God for thine object: receive a leſſon from the children of this world. Contemplate their ever-wakeful remembrance of the idols which they worſhip: and thou wilt diſcern what it is to ſet the Lord thy God always before thee.

(*a*) Luke, xvi. 8.

II. Let us, in the next place, inveſtigate the diſtinct characters, under which it is our duty to ſet the Lord our God before us.

1. In reflecting on the different characters, under which we may regard the Deity as having manifeſted himſelf towards man; the firſt which naturally ſtrikes the mind is that of Creator. He made us and all the world. There was a period when this earth was not in exiſtence; when there was neither ſun nor moon nor ſtar; when neither mankind, nor any of the innumerable tribes of living creatures, which have inhabited and ſtill inhabit this world, were in being. God, in his unbounded goodneſs, determined to create all theſe things. He called the earth into being, and ſeparated the land from the ſeas. He ſaid, *Let there be light and there was light:* and he made the returns of morning and evening to praiſe him. He created and placed upon the earth a countleſs variety of animals, to dwell on the land, in the air, and in the waters, and to poſſeſs the happineſs which he had made all, each according to its nature, capable of enjoying. And laſt of all he created man. On man he conferred dominion over all other living creatures. On man he ſhowered down a ſuperior meaſure of underſtanding. Within man he implanted the light of conſcience. And to crown every other gift with one ſtill greater,

greater, to man alone he unfolded the proſpect of a glorious immortality.

If then you deem life a bleſſing, remember Him who beſtowed it. Remember that it was the Lord God Almighty who formed you from the duſt of the ground, and breathed into your noſtrils the breath of life, ſo that you became a living ſoul. Remember that your Creator formed you of his own free will, of his own unbounded mercy: not becauſe he needed your exiſtence; but in order to diſplay the riches of his goodneſs, to render you happy here, to train you up for bleſſedneſs hereafter. Set the Lord your Creator before you. Remember the wonders which he has wrought for you in bringing you into this life and inviting you to look forward to a better. *O come and worſhip, and bow down, and kneel before the Lord your Maker* (*b*). From the gracious Author of your exiſtence withhold not the poor tribute of gratitude and love.

2. In the next place, when you contemplate yourſelf as an inhabitant of the earth, and turn your thoughts to the Supreme Being; you cannot fail to recogniſe Him as your Preſerver. To what cauſe is it owing that you are at this moment alive? To what cauſe

(*b*) Pſalm xcv. 6.

is it owing that you have eſcaped the innumerable ſnares of death, by which you have continually been encompaſſed? To what cauſe is it owing that you have not been afflicted with ſeverer ſickneſſes; that you do not labour under heavier and more numerous infirmities; that you have not drunk more frequently and more deeply of the cup of diſtreſs? To the preſerving mercy of God. How many perſons, whoſe conſtitution and general ſtate of health were in human eſtimation at leaſt as firm as your own, have you ſeen ſnatched away to the grave? How many have you ſeen laid on the bed of lingering decay, maimed and crippled by accidents, or reduced to miſery by loſſes and misfortunes? Who has guarded you under ſimilar dangers, and ſaved you from ſimilar calamities? God your Preſerver. What claim had you to this compaſſion and goodneſs at his hand? Have you performed greater deeds in the ſervice of God than others? Have you diſplayed a more lively faith? Have you manifeſted a more devout and holy life? Have you ſurpaſſed the reſt of the world in kindneſs to your fellow-creatures? You fix your eyes on the earth, and confeſs that you advance not any plea of ſuperiority. Remember then that to the loving

loving kindneſs of God, unmerited on your part, you owe the ſecurity which you have enjoyed from the perils and tribulations, by which ſo many others have been overwhelmed; and the poſſeſſion of all the comforts, all the happineſs, with which you find yourſelf ſurrounded. Set the Lord your Preſerver before you.

3. Farther, remember God as your Redeemer and your Sanctifier. Adam, by wilful diſobedience, forfeited the ſtate of happineſs and immortality for which he was created. His nature became corrupt; and he was made ſubject to death. You are the children of Adam. You have inherited from him a corrupt nature alienated from God; and a bodily frame which is ſoon to be turned into duſt. You have provoked the wrath of your Heavenly Father by offences without number. You have continually done thoſe things which you ought not to have done, and left undone thoſe things which you ought to have done. You have broken his laws, diſregarded his warnings, and made light of his favour. You have ſubjected yourſelves by ſpontaneous tranſgreſſion to the everlaſting puniſhment which he has denounced againſt ſinners; which, during the time when you have been committing ſins, you

knew that he had denounced. You had no power to avert his vengeance, to ſatisfy his juſtice. You could not hope to paſs even a ſingle day unſtained by freſh offences againſt him. But his free mercy has provided for you the means of deliverance, of forgiveneſs, of reſtoration to the inheritance of heaven. God ſo loved the world, that he ſent his only Son Jeſus Chriſt to redeem it, by making atonement for the ſins of mankind upon the croſs. Through faith in his blood you may receive pardon and peace. Believe in Him as your Saviour, and truly repent of your ſins. So ſhall the puniſhment which you have deſerved be turned away, for the ſake of the ſufferings and merits of Jeſus Chriſt. Nor is this the whole extent of his mercy. He who in his unbounded compaſſion undertook to become a ſacrifice in your ſtead; He who now intercedes for you at the right-hand of God; has purchaſed for you the ſanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit. Though you are prone to evil, and unable of yourſelf to withſtand temptation: the Spirit of God is ready to ſtrengthen and ſupport you. Though you have to contend againſt the malice and the ſnares of the devil and his angels; yet, if with ſincerity and fervency of prayer you addreſs yourſelf to God,

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he will enable you to conquer by the grace which he will pour into your heart. If you depend on yourſelf you are undone for ever: but they that truſt in the Moſt High ſhall not be confounded.

4. Set the Lord before you as your Sovereign and your Judge. He has ſtationed you upon earth that you may perform his good pleaſure; that you may be put to the proof whether through his offered grace you will keep his commandments or no. He has revealed to you his righteous laws: and he requires you to love and obey them. He has placed the Bible in your hands, that you may poſſeſs a recorded declaration of his will. He has appointed two ſacraments, by one of which you are dedicated to his name; by the other you are taught habitually to bear in mind your redemption through Jeſus Chriſt his Son. He has enjoined you to give diligent attendance on public worſhip, that you may unite with your fellow-Chriſtians in prayers, praiſes, and thankſgivings; that you may reverently liſten to his holy word; that you may thus have the mercies which you have received, the bleſſings of which you ſtand in need, and the duties which you are to fulfil, perpetually brought to your remembrance. He has forewarned you that a day is approach-

approaching, when this earth and all that it contains ſhall be deſtroyed; when throned in the clouds of heaven and encircled by angelic hoſts, Chriſt ſhall return to ſummon the living and the dead to judgement. He has announced to you the ſentence which awaits you againſt that dreadful day, accordingly as you ſhall be found in the number of thoſe who have accepted the goſpel and obeyed it from the heart; or among thoſe who have continued obſtinately or careleſsly in ſin. He has appriſed you that your ſtate will then be fixed in happineſs or in miſery for ever: that you will be exalted into heaven, into glory and happineſs which ſhall never fade away; or be caſt into hell, the priſon of apoſtate ſpirits, into the lake of fire which is the ſecond death.

III. Suffer me to illuſtrate by ſome examples the duty of ſetting Almighty God *always*, at all times, and under all circumſtances, before you.

Be it ſuppoſed that you are proſperous. Your proſperity you owe to God. It is to Him, and to Him only, that you are to look for the continuance of the whole and of any part of your happineſs. It is He who has filled your cup with bleſſings, and who keeps it

it full. It is He who has conferred ſucceſs on your induſtry and exertions. It is He who has raiſed you up friends. It is He who has given you cauſe to rejoice in your relations and in your children. It is He only who can beſtow upon you farther mercies in addition to the bleſſings which He may permit you to retain, or in the place of thoſe which His wiſdom may take away. Be grateful then for every mark of His loving-kindneſs with which you have been favoured. Give daily proof that you are ſincerely and warmly thankful for His bounties by poſſeſſing them with an humble heart, and by cheerfully employing a large portion of them for the good of your fellow-creatures. *Why doſt thou glory? Who maketh thee to differ from another? Freely thou haſt received: freely give. Remember the words of the Lord Jeſus; how He ſaid, It is more bleſſed to give than to receive* (*c*).

But you are encompaſſed by adverſity and affliction. Your comforts are curtailed: your diligence fails of its reward. Sickneſs preys upon your ſtrength. The ſtroke of death deprives you of near kindred, and even of your offspring. Fix your eyes on the Lord your God. Remember that no affliction

(*c*) 1 Cor. iv. 7. Matt. x. 15. Acts, xx. 35.

over-

overtakes you without His permiſſion. Remember that the event, which you now deem a calamity, may hereafter prove to have been moſt conducive to your eternal intereſts. Remember that diſtreſs and ſorrow are mercifully ſent by your Heavenly Father as chaſtiſements for your good in the end. You are by nature diſpoſed to dote on the preſent world; and to think little of that which, whether you think of it or not, is aſſuredly to come. If God were not pleaſed continually to admoniſh you by croſſes and diſappointments, by infirmities of body and anxieties of mind, that here you are not to remain long, that on earth no durable happineſs is to be enjoyed: you would diſmiſs the next life from your thoughts; you would forget to work out your ſalvation with fear and trembling; you would make no ſerious and habitual preparation to appear before your Judge. Conſider what numbers there are, who, in contempt of all theſe warnings, ſet their hearts upon the preſent world, and neglect and deſpiſe their God. Conſider whether, notwithſtanding all theſe warnings, you are not yourſelf neglecting or deſpiſing Him. Think then to what exceſſes of careleſſneſs and preſumption you would probably have been carried, if ſuch warnings had not been commiſſioned perpe-

perpetually to remind you of your duty. Bear your tribulation, whatever it be, patiently. Rejoice in it as the appointment of the wiſdom and the mercy of God. Rejoice in it as a leſſon of faith and righteouſneſs and true holineſs. Are your ſufferings and your afflictions great? How little in compariſon of your ſins! Glorify the Lord your Redeemer. Look up to Him, truſt in Him, and be comforted.

You are flouriſhing in the vigour of youth. Shall the tree withhold from the planter the prime of its fruit? When wilt thou ſerve thy God, if not now? Doſt thou count on years to come, thou who art a paſſing ſhadow, a dew-drop of the morning, a flame which an inſtant may extinguiſh? *I have ſeen the* young man *in great power, and ſpreading himſelf like a green bay-tree. Yet he paſſed away, and lo, he was not: yea I ſought him, but he could not be found* (*d*). Doſt thou poſtpone the remembrance of thy Creator unto the evil days of old age? Hear then the language of thy thoughts. "O God! I love "Thee not. Power I love: riches I love: "pleaſure I love. To theſe objects I have "devoted my heart: to theſe I would willingly dedicate my whole life. But on that

(*d*) Pſ. xxxvii. 35.

"reſo-

" reſolution I dare not venture. Though I " love Thee not; I am afraid of Thee. I " will therefore take a middle path. The " noon of life I give to my darling purſuits. " And when declining years ſhall have " ſtripped indulgence of its reliſh; I will " aſſign a portion of my time to Thee." Doſt thou recoil from ſuch baſeneſs? Doſt thou tremble at ſuch ingratitude? Set the Lord thy God before thee. Honour Him with His own gifts. Conſecrate to Him thy preſent ſtrength. Conſecrate to Him the beſt of thy ſtrength. Conſecrate to Him the whole of thy ſtrength. Be thou *like a green olive-tree in the houſe of God, that bringeth forth its fruit in its ſeaſon* (*e*).

But age has already ſtamped its characters upon thee. Does the ancient tree count on length of years? Does it refuſe to its owner the ſcanty produce, which it ſtill has energy to ſupply? Its ſummit is bare: its branches are ſapleſs: its trunk is hollow: its roots are decayed. The earlieſt blaſt may lay it low. Even ſooner, it may periſh by the ſentence; *Cut it down. Why cumbereth it the ground* (*f*). Planted in the Chriſtian church, the garden of God, haſt thou been wilfully barren during the fulneſs of thy vigour; and art thou

(*e*) Pſ. lii. 8. i. 3. (*f*) Luke, xiii. 7.

wilfully

wilfully barren ſtill? Or, if hitherto productive, doſt thou now at length refuſe to thy God the tribute, which his nurturing grace even yet enables thee to offer? Remember the Lord, thy rock; and the High God, thy Redeemer. Let it ſuffice that youth deludes itſelf with diſtant proſpects. Thou art about to put off thy tabernacle: the time of thy departure is at hand. The night cometh: work, while it is called to-day. In the grave is no repentance: ſeek mercy while yet it may be found.

I cloſe theſe illuſtrations in reminding you that to ſet the Lord conſtantly before you is no leſs your duty while you are following the daily buſineſs of your ſtation, than while you are employed in public worſhip, in private prayer, or in any other ſpecial act of religion. Your whole life is to be one continued act of religion. *Whatſoever you do, do all to the glory of God, that God may in all things be glorified through Jeſus Chriſt* (*g*). Thus if you are engaged in a mercantile tranſaction; reflect that God ſees your proceedings, and the train of thought which paſſes in your heart. He ſees whether you demand an unreaſonable profit. He ſees whether you are deſirous of impoſing on the other party. He ſees whether

(*g*) 1 Cor. x. 31. 1 Pet. iv. 11.

ther you take pains to conduct yourſelf towards the perſon with whom you are dealing, not only with fairneſs and moderation, but alſo with kindneſs. All theſe things He ſees, and marks them down againſt the day of judgement. If you have covenanted to execute a piece of work for an employer; conſider that the eye of God is fixed upon you. He obſerves whether you perform your undertaking, whatever it be, carefully and effectually, as you would act under ſimilar circumſtances for yourſelf. He obſerves whether you honeſtly conſign to your employer's ſervice all the time for which he pays you: or whether you defraud him, when you preſume that you ſhall eſcape diſcovery, by waſting part of it in idleneſs, or by expending it on buſineſs of your own. Theſe things he obſerves; and marks them down againſt the great day. If you are cultivating your farm; if you are ſelling your articles in the market or in a ſhop; if you are ſerving a maſter in your daily labour; if you are managing the concerns of your friend or of your country: remember that God is contemplating all your motives, all your thoughts, all your words, all your actions; and that for all your motives and thoughts and words and actions you will have to render an account at the

judgement-ſeat of Chriſt, when *the books ſhall be opened and the dead ſhall be judged out of thoſe things which are written in the books, according to their works* (*h*).

IV. Direct your attention to the recompence of thoſe, who ſet the Lord always before them. *The Lord is on their right hand: they ſhall not be moved.*

Them that honour me, ſaith the Lord; I will honour (*i*). *If a man love me,* ſaith Chriſt, *my Father will love him; and we will come unto him and make our abode with him* (*k*). The habitual piety of David was recompenſed with the protection of his God. The habitual piety of a Chriſtian ſhall not receive a leſs bounteous reward. The God whom he places before his eyes, the Lord his Redeemer whom he ſerves with ſingleneſs of heart, will ſhelter him from evil, will reſcue him from danger, will crown him with bleſſings, will make all things work together unto him for good in the end. *Becauſe he hath ſet his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him. I will ſet him on high, becauſe he hath known my name. He ſhall call upon Me, and I will anſwer him: I will be with*

(*h*) Rev. xx. 12. (*i*) 1 Sam. ii. 30. (*k*) John, xiv. 23.

him in trouble. I will deliver him and honour him. With long life will I ſatisfy him, and ſhew him my ſalvation (*l*).

In the pſalm from which the text is taken, no leſs clearly than in that which has recently been quoted, a greater than David preſents himſelf. *I have ſet the Lord always before me. Becauſe he is on my right hand, I ſhall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: My fleſh alſo ſhall reſt in hope. For thou wilt not leave my ſoul in hell: neither wilt thou ſuffer thy holy One to ſee corruption. Thou wilt ſhew me the path of life. In thy preſence is fulneſs of joy: and at thy right hand are pleaſures for evermore.* In Jeſus the Saviour, in the Son of God become man, in Him who alone was by nature without ſin, in Him who alone was perfect in obedience to the will of his Father; theſe promiſes received a literal accompliſhment. His Father ſuſtained Him in His anguiſh. His ſoul ſpeedily returned from the abode of departed ſpirits. His body ſaw not corruption. He aſcended, as man, to everlaſting life, to the preſence of God, to unchangeable bleſſedneſs, to the Mediatorial throne of the univerſe. But through the atonement of his

(*l*) Pſ. xci. 14—16.

blood

blood the promiſes are ſubſtantially extended to every individual among his faithful followers. The true Chriſtian, like his Maſter, muſt ſuffer: but, like his maſter, he looks to God, and is ſupported. His body muſt ſee corruption. The child of Adam muſt bear the full penalty of temporal death. He muſt return unto the duſt from whence he was taken. He ſhall *ſay to corruption, Thou art my father: to the worm, Thou art my mother and my ſiſter* (*m*). Yet his heart is glad and his glory rejoiceth: his fleſh alſo ſhall reſt in hope. For *though worms deſtroy this body; yet in his fleſh ſhall he ſee God. For this corruptible ſhall put on incorruption; this mortal ſhall put on immortality* (*n*). He ſhall behold the path of life. He ſhall hear the voice of his Redeemer; "Becauſe I live, thou ſhalt "live alſo (*o*)." He *ſhall meet the Lord in the air.* He ſhall aſcend to the preſence of God. He ſhall ſtand before the Moſt High juſtified and accepted in the righteouſneſs of Chriſt. He ſhall enter into bliſs; into bliſs that fadeth not away; the bliſs of *angels, to whom he is* made *equal;* the bliſs of *the children of God in the light of the glory of God and of the Lamb* (*p*). He ſhall be with

(*m*) Job, xvii. 14. (*n*) Job, xix. 26. 1 Cor. xv. 53.
(*o*) John, xiv. 19. (*p*) Luke, xx. 36. Rev. xxi. 23.

Chriſt, he ſhall be for ever with the Lord, and behold his glory, and ſee him as he is, face to face, and be like unto him (*q*). He hath overcome: and he ſhall ſit with Chriſt on His throne, even as Chriſt alſo overcame, and is ſet down with His Father on His throne. He ſhall reign with Chriſt for ever and ever (*r*).

(*q*) John, xii. 26. xvii. 24. 1 Theſſ. iv. 17. 1 John, iii. 2. 1 Cor. xiii. 12. (*r*) Rev. iii. 21. xxii. 5. 2 Tim. ii. 12.

SERMON XIII.

On the Character of Herod Antipas.

MARK, vi. 16.

When Herod heard thereof, he ſaid; It is John, whom I beheaded: he is riſen from the dead.

AT the time of which the Evangeliſt is ſpeaking, the fame of Jeſus Chriſt had diffuſed itſelf over the land of Judea. Multitudes had ſeen the wonderful works which he had performed. Thoſe who had not ſeen them had heard of them. The ſick whom he had healed, the blind, the deaf, and the dumb whom he had reſtored, filled every part of the country with their gratitude and praiſes. "But who is he," demanded the people "by whom theſe ſigns and wonders

" are wrought?" This queſtion was variouſly anſwered. Some affirmed our Lord to be the promiſed Saviour. Others conceived that he was one of the ancient prophets returned to life. Others imagined that he was a meſſenger of God like unto the prophets of old. But all men plainly diſcerned that he exerciſed powers out of the common courſe of nature; and that he muſt have been ſent upon earth for ſome very intereſting purpoſe. Accounts of theſe ſingular events ſoon reached the palace of Herod Antipas (*a*); and came ſo frequently repeated, and ſo ſtrongly confirmed, that it was impoſſible not to credit them. The king, however, concluded that the Jews were led aſtray by erroneous conjectures reſpecting Jeſus Chriſt; and felt aſſured that he was himſelf able to pronounce who this extraordinary perſon was. *It is John*, ſaid he, *whom I beheaded. He is riſen from the dead.*

Herod, in defiance of the Moſaic law, had contracted a marriage with Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip. John the Baptiſt, whom God had ordained to be a preacher of righteouſneſs, and had commiſſioned to call

(*a*) He was ſon to that Herod who is memorable for the ſlaughter of Bethlehem; and ſucceſſor to part of his dominions.

every

every man to repentance, was upright and reſolute in the diſcharge of his duty; and would not ſuffer even his king to commit ſo flagrant a ſin without rebuking him to his face. John could not but foreknow the dangers, to which he expoſed himſelf by his plain-dealing. But he diſregarded them. He was ſolicitous to be faithful to God: and feeling that ſolicitude, he felt no other. The event was ſuch as he had reaſon to expect. Herodias ſet her heart upon vengeance. She perſuaded Herod immediately to throw John into priſon; and exerted all her influence to procure an order for his death. For ſome time her machinations were fruitleſs. The king would not comply. He *feared John, knowing that he was a juſt and holy man*: and even yet would liſten gladly to his preaching, and would do many things which he deſired. But he ſtill detained him in priſon. The artifices of that abandoned woman at length prevailed. She found *a convenient time.* Her daughter pleaſed Herod by dancing before him on his birth-day: and the king having inadvertently promiſed with an oath that he would beſtow on the young woman whatever recompence ſhe ſhould aſk, ſhe deſired, in conſequence of having been prompted by

her mother, that the head of John the Baptiſt might be delivered to her in a charger. The king, though ſhocked at the iniquity and ſcandalous cruelty of the requeſt, was aſhamed, after his public declarations, to refuſe it. He iſſued orders to the executioner. The righteous man was put to death. And the daughter of Herodias carried his head, bleeding as it was, to her mother.

Such is the ſummary of this tranſaction. I proceed to comment with greater particularity on its prominent features: and purpoſe afterwards to lay before you ſome obſervations, which may aſſiſt you in applying the hiſtory to your own improvement.

I. Contemplate in the conduct of Herod and of his queen the natural progreſs of depravity. Look primarily to Herodias. She in the firſt place married the brother of her former huſband, and while that huſband was alive. Of ſo flagrant a nature was this crime, that if we had heard nothing farther, even charity itſelf, which hopeth all things, could not have perſuaded itſelf that ſhe had ſinned through ignorance. And the remainder of her hiſtory precludes all palliation of her guilt. She is informed that a great prophet John the Baptiſt, has preſented

ſented himſelf before Herod; and has charged him, as he values the mercy of God to put her away. What effect has this intelligence? Does ſhe humble herſelf before her Maker? Does ſhe bewail her ſin in bitterneſs of ſoul? Does ſhe inſtantly ſeparate herſelf from Herod? From that moment ſhe is determined on the deſtruction of the prophet; and continues with Herod as before.

What in the mean time is the conduct of Herod? He deſpiſes the warning of John, and refuſes to diſſolve his unhallowed marriage. He yields to the malignant importunities of Herodias, ſeizes the holy man who has reproved him, and ſhuts him up in priſon. Yet hardened as he is, he has not arrived at that point in the ſcale of depravity to which his guilty partner has attained. She heſitates at no crime; ſhe is loſt to all feeling, paſt all compunction. Her heart *is ſeared*, as St. Paul expreſſes himſelf, *with a red-hot iron*. But Herod has ſtill ſome miſgivings of conſcience left. There are yet ſome crimes on which he is afraid to venture. Though he has impriſoned John, and well knows that he has impriſoned the prophet for ſpeaking the truth and adhering to the path of duty; he ſhrinks from the idea of killing him. One of the reaſons which deters him from conſenting

ſenting to the murder is his fear leſt the people of the land, who all believe John to be a prophet, ſhould riſe in arms to avenge his death (*b*). But it is evident that Herod has alſo ſcruples of conſcience which contribute to his reluctance. For he has long been thoroughly acquainted with the manner of life and the conduct of John, he has been accuſtomed to frequent attendance on his inſtructions. He ſtill liſtens to them at times with gladneſs; and in many reſpects regulates his own proceedings in conformity to the exhortations of the prophet. Sunk in ſin, he trembles in the preſence of holineſs. Enſlaved to Satan, he reverences the name of God. "Let thy impriſonment," he whiſpers to himſelf, "let thy unjuſt impriſonment ſatisfy the queen. Thy blood ſhall "not be upon my head."

The malice of Herodias is unabated. The king, it is true, has not yet conſented to her purpoſe: but ſhe does not deſpair. She has already proved herſelf able to perſuade him to detain John in priſon; and ſhe hopes, by ſeizing ſome favourable opportunity, to obtain a mandate for his execution. A favourable opportunity arrives; and ſhe does not let it ſlip. In a moment of riotous feſti-

(*b*) Matt. xiv. 5.

vity Herod promiſes to grant her daughter's requeſt even though it ſhould amount, according to his own figurative expreſſion, to the half of his kingdom. The young woman retires to conſult her mother. In her abſence behold Herod amuſing himſelf with conjectures concerning the nature of the recompence which ſhe will prefer. "Will "ſhe demand a jewelled robe? A ſumptuous "palace? The revenues of a city? The go-"vernment of a province?" He knows not what is paſſing in the mind of Herodias. He knows not that vanity and pride and avarice and ambition have retired, and have relinquiſhed the whole heart to revenge. His ſpeculations are interrupted by the entrance of her daughter. Mirth and curioſity ſparkle in his eyes. She advances *ſtraightway with haſte*. All is ſilent. She requires the head of John the Baptiſt! She requires that it be produced without delay. She requires that it be delivered to her in a charger, that her mother may glut herſelf with the ſpectacle. How does Herod receive the demand? Does he aver that no promiſe, no oath, can bind him to do that which he has no right to do, that which God has forbidden, to commit murder? Does he reject the claim with abhorrence? Does he puniſh

thoſe

thoſe who urge it? Herod *loves the praiſe of men more than the praiſe of God.* He is *exceeding ſorry* when he hears the requeſt of the daughter of Herodias. But habits of ſin have perverted his underſtanding, clouded his conſcience, undermined his ſtedfaſtneſs, enſlaved him to falſe ſhame. He is perplexed by indiſtinct ſcruples, or pretends to be perplexed by ſcruples reſpecting his oath. He apprehends that his nobles will cenſure him if he departs from his word. He immediately commiſſions the executioner to behead John in the priſon.

Within no long time afterwards, Herod is appriſed of the wonderful actions of Jeſus Chriſt; and of the different opinions which men entertain concerning him. His own opinion is ſpeedily formed. He concludes that John the Baptiſt is reſtored to life. Whence is this concluſion? Whence, but from the remembrance of his guilt, which haunts him night and day, and menaces him with the ſure chaſtiſement of heaven? Overwhelmed with terror and conſternation, he concludes that God has undertaken the cauſe of his ſervant; that God has raiſed the murdered prophet from the grave, and has ſent him again upon earth armed with the power of working the moſt ſtupendous miracles, that he

may

may avenge himſelf on the wretch who deſpiſed his reproof and ſhed his innocent blood. *It is John*, he cries, *whom I beheaded. He is riſen from the dead: and therefore mighty works do ſhew forth themſelves in him!* Such are the terrors of a wounded conſcience!

II. Let me add ſome obſervations, applicable to your own conduct, which are ſuggeſted by the hiſtory before us.

1. In the firſt place, allow not yourſelf to be entrapped into ſin by the ſolicitations and importunities of others, not even of your friends and your neareſt relations, ſhould you be unhappy enough to perceive tempters among them. That you may encounter a tempter in your own family, in your children, in the huſband or the wife of your boſom, is not impoſſible. You will not be urged, it may be preſumed, to procure the impriſonment or the murder of another. But were tempters ever at a loſs for grounds of temptation? If you are in poverty; may they not impel you to meliorate your condition by depredations on the property of a neighbour: to conceal from the owner that which you have found; or to excite charity by exaggerated repreſentations of your diſtreſs? Are you moving in a higher ſphere?

ſphere? May they not enſnare you into captivity to ambition? May they not mould you into ſlaves of faſhion? May they not transform you into votaries of worldly praiſe? May they not ſeduce you into the habit of ſquandering in diſſipation that ſacred talent, time, entruſted to your charge; while negligent of the glory of God, and practically careleſs of ſalvation, you hurry and flutter acroſs the ſtage of life, until death ſuddenly ſhifts the ſcene, and unveils the judgements of eternity? And whether you occupy a lower or a higher ſtation, may they not encourage you to over-reach an ignorant or a careleſs man in a contract; to revenge yourſelf on ſome perſon who has offended you, or whom you envy, by ſpreading a ſlanderous tale to his diſadvantage; to withhold reparation from thoſe whom you have wronged; to ſurrender your heart to things temporal; to live not unto God and Chriſt, but unto the world and yourſelf? Stand prepared upon the watch-tower. Obey the Lord Omnipotent, not man. Reſiſt the aſſaults of the devil, whatever be the inſtruments which he employs. Away with fear, with irreſolution, with falſe ſhame. Be ſtrong in the grace of Chriſt. *Fight the good fight of faith. Let no man deceive you with vain words; follow not a multitude to do evil;*

evil: and be not aſhamed when it concerneth thy ſoul (*c*).

2. Remember, ſecondly, that one ſin naturally leads to another: that, if you indulge in ſmall offences, you will be carried headlong into greater. You have drawn up the flood-gates: and who ſhall pronounce where the torrent ſhall be ſtayed? The whole of Herod's guilt flowed from his unlawful marriage. Obſerve him progreſſively advancing through additional degrees of iniquity. When John rebuked him for having married his brother's wife, he diſregarded the warning; but he offered no violence to the prophet, and permitted him to retire in ſafety. In a ſhort time, his wrath became more hot; *and he ſent forth and laid hold on John, and bound him in priſon.* Speedily afterwards he completed the meaſure of his crimes, and cauſed the innocent man to be murdered. How frequently doth a ſimilar progreſs occur! In the humbler ranks of life you ſee a man beginning to be idle, and to neglect his buſineſs. This evil habit grows upon him. His time ſoon hangs heavy upon his hands: and he fills it up at the public houſe; at firſt going thither ſparingly, but ere long, to be

(*c*) 1 Tim. vi. 12. Eph. v. 6. Exod. xxiii. 2. Eccleſ. iv. 20.

found

found there almoſt every day. Now drunkenneſs is added to idleneſs. Theſe two ſins ſpeedily make him poor: and he reſorts to diſhoneſt means of gaining money; venturing at firſt only upon petty acts of fraud and rapine; but preſently growing bolder in wickedneſs, till juſtice overtakes him, and he finiſhes his days in exile or on the gallows. The criminal of high life, in the mean time, purſues a kindred career, but in a wider and a more ſplendid circle. He commences with faſhionable extravagance. He ſteps forward to faſhionable profligacy. He grows hardened through the deceitfulneſs of ſin. He becomes abandoned to ſelfiſhneſs, to ſenſuality, to depravity, to fearleſſneſs of God. He lives an object of deteſtation; or dies by the hand of the law, by that of a duelliſt, or by his own. Make your ſtand through divine grace againſt *the beginnings of ſin*; for you know not what will be the end thereof.

3. Thirdly: contemplate the inconſiſtency, the weakneſs and the corruption of human nature. Conclude not, becauſe you have been repeatedly enabled by the Holy Spirit of God to reſiſt a particular temptation, that you may deem yourſelf capable of reſiſting it always. Herod withſtood for a ſeaſon the arts and importunities of Herodias. She waited

waited until ſhe found *a convenient time;* renewed the attempt, and ſucceeded. The great enemy of man, who inſtigated this murdereſs and rendered her ſucceſsful, is ever on the watch to betray you. He is waiting for the hour, when you ſhall no longer be on your guard; or when you ſhall have grieved by a recent offence the Spirit of God; or when a concurrence of enſnaring circumſtances ſhall heighten the allurements of ſin. The birthday of Herod ſhall arrive. Thy heart ſhall be opened to enticement. The year ſhall not revolve without bringing *the convenient time.* Mirth ſhall render thee thoughtleſs: or ſorrow ſhall bow thee to deſpondence. Pride ſhall inflate thee with confidence: or ſloth ſhall indiſpoſe thee to exertion. Then ſhall the temptation preſent itſelf afreſh: perhaps in its original garb; or, if need be, in colours more attractive. *What I ſay unto you, I ſay unto all; Watch. Reſiſt the devil; and he will flee from you. Be not high-minded; but fear. Let him that thinketh he ſtandeth, take heed leſt he fall. Strive to enter in at the ſtrait gate. Strive againſt ſin: ſtrive according to His working, which worketh in you mightily. Draw nigh to God and he will draw nigh to you* (*d*).

(*d*) Mark, xiii. 37. James, iv. 7, 8. Romans, xi. 20. 1 Cor. x. 12. Luke, xiii. 24. Hebr. xii. 14. Col. i. 29.

4. Let me in the next place advert to a conſideration, which, however it may in ſome meaſure have been implied in the preceding remarks, requires, on account of its high importance, to be expreſsly ſtated by itſelf. It is this: that nothing ſhort of a ſettled determination to labour to avoid *all* ſin, joined with conſtant application to God, through Chriſt, for the influence of his ſanctifying Spirit, can authoriſe you to hope that you ſhall preſerve for a ſingle hour a conſcience void of offence. Nothing ſhort of this determination is religion. If you refuſe to ſurrender yourſelf wholly to God; you are a rebel. If you refuſe the unqualified ſurrender of yourſelf to Him, and profeſs to be religious; you are an hypocrite. The dominion of the entire heart, the ſovereignty of the whole ſoul, the poſſeſſion of the affections in a meaſure ſo predominant that your tendereſt feelings for the earthly objects which you hold moſt dear deſerve, when placed in comparifon with your love to God and your Redeemer, the denomination of hatred (*e*): this is the homage required from the diſciple of Chriſt. *Herod feared John and obſerved him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.* But he retained his brother's wife. Is there an

(*e*) Luke, xiv. 26. John, xii. 25.

Herodias

Herodias whom thou wilt not divorce? Is there ſome ſenſual gratification, which thou wilt not abandon? Is there ſome unlawful gain which thou wilt not renounce? Is there ridicule which thou wilt not encounter? Is there hardſhip which thou wilt not ſuſtain? Thy pleaſure, thine intereſt, thy reputation, thine eaſe, thou loveſt more than thou loveſt Chriſt. Why boaſteth thou of thy partial obedience? Of what avail are thy regular devotions, thy kindneſs to thy friends, thy liberality to the poor, thy uſefulneſs to ſociety? Thy heart is unſound. Before God thou art a rebel and an hypocrite. What is thy language to thy Saviour? "Behold theſe ſubor-
"dinate indulgences, which at thy command
"I diſclaim. Be contented with the ſacri-
"fice. Expect not the ſurrender of my
"favourite object. Thou didſt lay down thy
"life for my ſake: but I will not relinquiſh
"this ſin for thine." Sayeſt thou thus to thy Saviour; and calleſt thou thyſelf his diſciple?

The propenſity of the heart to ſelf-deluſion exceeds all previous computations. Man is continually deviſing by all conceivable methods to aſcribe merit to himſelf: and at the very time when he confeſſes that he is regularly proceeding in ſome wicked line of conduct, is

prone to value himſelf highly for having refrained from a more flagrant tranſgreſſion. It is not in the leaſt improbable that Herod, conſcious as he was that he moſt unjuſtly detained John the Baptiſt in priſon, applauded himſelf with complacency, and aſſumed in his own eſtimation great credit for virtue, becauſe he had withſtood the ſolicitations of Herodias for his death. Have not you alſo, while aware that you have lived under the habitual influence of ſome unchriſtian temper, in the habitual indulgence of ſome unchriſtian practice; have not you alſo been proudly congratulating yourſelf on your goodneſs, becauſe you have abſtained from other crimes to which you were tempted? Have you not been ſatisfying yourſelf for yielding to the one temptation, by reminding your conſcience that you did not yield to the other? Have you not hankered after a compromiſe with divine juſtice; and meditated the production of a balance of ſelf-righteouſneſs to countervail the penalty of guilt? *Thus ſaith the Lord of Hoſts; Conſider your ways* (*f*). How long ſhall *a deceived heart turn thee aſide* (*g*)? How long ſhall it be ere thou knoweſt that *thou art wretched and miſerable and poor and blind and naked* (*h*). How long

(*f*) Haggai, i. 5. (*g*) Iſaiah, xliv. 20. (*h*) Rev. iii. 17.

ſhall

ſhall it be ere thou underſtandeſt the curſe of the law; *Curſed is every one who continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them* (*i*)?

If example can affect you, look to that of Herod. Behold in him an illuſtration of the conſequences entailed on perſeverance in a ſingle ſin. In him behold a picture of that abandoned depravity, of which perſeverance in a ſingle ſin is naturally the forerunner. To *all the evils which Herod had done* we have ſeen him *adding yet this above all, that he ſhut up John in priſon* (*k*). We have ſeen him farther advanced in the road to deſtruction, and taking away the Baptiſt's life. We have ſtill to behold him ſurpaſſing all his former guilt. Behold him, a worthy deſcendent of his Father, plotting the death of the Saviour of the world (*l*). Behold this murderer, when the Saviour of the world was delivered into his power by the Romans, triumphing over his captive with ſtudied bitterneſs of inſult; expoſing him to the brutal ſcoffs of the ſoldiery; mocking him, and ſetting him at nought; and finally ſending him back to the Roman governor arrayed in a gorgeous robe, intended at once to throw deriſion upon his claim to be the Meſſiah,

(*i*) Gal. iii. 10. (*k*) Luke, iii. 19, 20. (*l*) Luke, xiii. 31, 32.

and to enſure his death by confirming the charge of treaſon againſt Cæſar (*m*). Is there an Herodias whom you will not divorce? Let ſuitable temptations ariſe: and guilt equal to that of Herod may become yours. *If we ſin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more ſacrifice for ſins; but a certain looking for of judgement, and fiery indignation. If he that deſpiſed the law of Moſes died without mercy: of how much ſorer puniſhment ſhall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the Covenant wherewith he was ſanctified an unholy thing, and hath done deſpite unto the Spirit of grace* (*n*)?

I would leave on the recollection of the careleſs ſinner one additional truth, to which Herod, could his voice reach our ears, would bear witneſs. It is poſſible for you to reſign yourſelf to habitual wickedneſs, until your heardened heart loſe all ſenſe of its enormity. It is poſſible for you to add crime to crime, until you entirely forget numbers which you have committed. But an hour when they ſhall be remembered is approaching. The guilty deed *is not dead, but ſleepeth.* When you are laid on your death-bed, all your

(*m*) Luke, xiii. 6. 12. Acts, iv. 27, 28. (*n*) Hebr. x. 26—29.

crimes

crimes ſhall return to life; and as the ſuppoſed revival of John the Baptiſt diſmayed the king who had murdered him, ſhall rack your ſoul with horrors known only to the ſinful wretch when he trembles on the brink of the grave, and ſhrinks from the proſpect of damnation. May your heart be renewed by the Holy Spirit! May you fly without delay to Chriſt. May you ſurrender yourſelf to Him without reſerve. By His bleſſed atonement may you be rendered acceptable to God. May your laſt hours be cheered by ſcriptural hopes of entering through His merits into everlaſting glory!

SERMON XIV.

On the Extent of genuine Religion.

MICAH, vi. 8.

He hath ſhewed thee, O Man, what is good. And what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do juſtly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

IN urging upon men their various obligations as ſervants of the Moſt High, the Holy Scriptures have recourſe in different places to a diverſity of arrangement. Moſt commonly, they preſs upon us in the firſt inſtance that ſupreme and affectionate faith towards God and Chriſt, which is the foundation of every Chriſtan virtue: and then proceed to inculcate thoſe pure principles, thoſe holy tempers, and thoſe good works, which genuine

genuine faith in God and Chriſt will neceſſarily produce. Sometimes, however, ſolicitous to recommend the tree by a reference to the excellence of the fruit, they ſpecify works in the outſet: and then direct our views to that faith, from which every acceptable work is to ſpring. And though, in delivering a ſtatement of human duties, they uſually commence with thoſe of which the Almighty is the immediate object; the order is ſometimes changed, and the duties which we are to perform towards our neighbour are preſented firſt to our conſideration. Let the miniſters of religion, ſolicitous that they *may be found in the day of Chriſt not to have run in vain, neither to have laboured in vain*, purſue the ſeveral tracks of argument and perſuaſion, which they ſee recommended by the footſteps of prophets and apoſtles. Yet whatever be the courſe to which the *ambaſſador of Chriſt* reſorts in his exertions to conciliate a refractory world to the offer of pardon and peace; love to God and our Redeemer, whether mentioned firſt or laſt, muſt be the fountain from which every human duty is derived. Chriſt is the corner-ſtone of the belief and the practice of a Chriſtian. Is faith preached? It muſt be faith in Chriſt. Are good works inculcated? They muſt be

good

good works growing out of that faith. Are holy principles and views and tempers required? It is that your ſouls may be conformed to the image of Chriſt. Is love to your neighbour enjoined? It is in imitation of that love wherewith Chriſt loved him, and gave himſelf for him an offering and a ſacrifice unto God. Whatever is taught, whatever is commanded, whatever is forbidden; whether we exhort, or perſuade, whether we ſpeak of *the glory that ſhall be revealed*, or as *knowing the terrors of the Lord*: this is our ground-work and our purpoſe, *that God may in all things be glorified through Jeſus Chriſt; to whom be praiſe and dominion for ever and ever.*

On the preſent occaſion I purpoſe to explain the different branches of human duty according to the order, in which they are arranged by the prophet.

The chapter, whence the paſſage before us is taken, opens with ſingular magnificence. Jehovah commands his choſen people to ariſe, and plead their cauſe againſt Him: and ſummons *the hills* and *the mountains*, and *the ſtrong foundations of the earth* to hear and to decide the controverſy between his rebellious ſervants and Himſelf. Scarcely has he made mention of his mercies in reſcuing the

the children of Iſrael from the bondage of Egypt and the machinations of Balak; when he is repreſented as ſuddenly interrupted by the impaſſioned exclamations of one of the multitude pierced with a conviction of his own ſin and of the divine goodneſs, and eagerly enquiring after the means of making atonement for his guilt and regaining the favour of Omnipotence. *Wherewith ſhall I come before the Lord, and bow myſelf before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleaſed with thouſands of rams, or with ten thouſands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firſt born for my tranſgreſſion; the fruit of my body for the ſin of my ſoul* (*a*)? The prophet, in the name of God, returns the anſwer. *He hath ſhewed thee, O man, what is good. And what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do juſtly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*

The queſtion is as intereſting to us as it was to the Jew. Let us conſider the reply as addreſſed to ourſelves.

(*a*) A critic of great eminence conſiders theſe words as ſpoken by Balak. To that opinion another aſſents, with the exception of attributing the firſt part of verſe 7 to Balaam. The context, I apprehend, aſſigns the whole paſſage to the mouth of a Jew. But its import, whoever be the ſpeaker, is the ſame.

I. *He*

I. *He hath ſhewed thee, O man, what is good.* So clearly hath God made known whatever is neceſſary to ſalvation, that they who attain not ſalvation ſhall ſtand without excuſe. In the breaſt of every man He hath implanted a natural conſcience, capable of diſcriminating between good and evil, prepared with ſecret ſtings for the chaſtiſement of guilt, and with ſilent approbation for the encouragement of obedience. But conſcience may be blinded and led aſtray, may be hardened and deadened by the practice of ſin. God has therefore given to us His written word. In the Old Teſtament by the mouth of His holy prophets, in the New Teſtament by the mouth of His own Son, and of the apoſtles, of His Son, He replies in the plaineſt terms to the momentous queſtion, What muſt we do to be ſaved? He ſets before us the way of life and the way of death; the road to heaven, and the road to hell. He has diſtinguiſhed them by marks ſo ſtriking, that it is impoſſible that the one track can be miſtaken for the other by a ſincere and humble enquirer. He has ſhewn them to be as different as light and darkneſs, as widely ſeparated as the eaſt from the weſt. By hope and by fear, by argument and by entreaty, by mercy and by judgement, he urges

urges us to chooſe the path of life and to fly from the way of deſtruction. On every man he beſtows power to attain eternal life. He enſures to every faithful ſuppliant the all-ſufficient influence of His Holy Spirit, not only that it may enlighten the mind to underſtand the Scriptures, but may alſo give grace to obey them. He commands his miniſters to *preach the goſpel throughout all the world to every creature*; to proclaim the offer of univerſal ſalvation, to call ſinners to repentance, to inſtruct the ignorant, to ſtrengthen the weak, to denounce vengeance on the careleſs and the obſtinate, to confirm and animate the pious. Thus truly may it be affirmed, that God hath ſhewed us what is good. Thus truly may it be affirmed, that God willeth not the death of the wicked, but that all ſhould be converted and live. If you know not your duty; it is becauſe you will not know it. If you periſh through ignorance; it is becauſe you prefer ignorance to underſtanding.

II. What then muſt we do to be ſaved? The prophet anſwers the enquirer, Do juſtly: love mercy: and walk humbly with your God.

1. Firſt; you muſt do juſtly. You muſt be juſt in every part of every one of your

proceedings. You muſt render to every man, you muſt render cheerfully and without delay, that which belongs to him. This rule obliges you on all occaſions to ſpeak the truth. For a lie is not only a breach of your duty to God, who is a God of truth and hateth deceit; but is alſo a breach of your duty to your neighbour. The man to whom you addreſs a lie, you ſeek to deceive. You lead him aſtray. You cauſe him to form expectations, or to cheriſh hopes, or to adopt meaſures, upon the ſtrength of your words: and thoſe words are falſe. Thus, as far as depends on yourſelf, you injure him. A lie therefore is a breach of juſtice. And whenever you are guilty of a lie, you are guilty of a crime which belongs to the ſame claſs with theft and robbery. Beware then of deeming yourſelf an honeſt man, if you are a wilful liar; and leaſt of all if you are a ſlanderer, robbing your neighbour of that which is more valuable than riches, his good name.

The rule of doing juſtly conſtrains you, in the next place, to be a faithful ſubject to the King; to ſubmit to all who are entitled to authority over you; and to obey all the laws of your country. For obedience is due to the king, and to all inferior magiſtrates, ac-

cording to their ſeveral ſtations. If you fail in rendering obedience, you defraud them of their right. You receive the protection of the laws. Are you not then bound and pledged to obey them? Again: juſtice prohibits you from injuring the perſon and reſtraining the liberty of your neighbour. The free enjoyment of his life and limbs is a right conferred upon him by his Creator, and guaranteed by the ſtatutes of the realm. Do you interfere with the poſſeſſion which he holds under the ſanction of his country and his God; and pretend that you deprive him not of that which is his own? Again: juſtice requires that you ſhould in no reſpect injure your neighbour's property. The methods by which another may be injured in his property are numberleſs. In ſome caſes the guilt is ſo palpable, that it cannot be miſtaken. If a man commits a forgery; if he robs on the highway; if he ſteals an article privately; if he maliciouſly damages the poſſeſſion of another; he is inſtantly pronounced unjuſt. But there are other caſes, in which the ſentence is equally deſerved, and is aſſuredly pronounced by the all-ſeeing Judge; while the criminal perceives not, or perceives with more than uſual reluctance, the extent of his injuſtice. Thus a perſon, it may be, who

has

has found property which does not belong to him, does not *take pains* to find out the right owner; but ſatisfies his conſcience with thinking that he is ready to make reſtitution, if the owner ſhould unluckily find him out. Another perhaps, who is engaged in a law-ſuit, contrives to entail on his adverſary unneceſſary expence or delay; and excuſes himſelf by profeſſing that it is not unfair to ſeize any advantage which offers itſelf in a conteſt. Another circulates counterfeit money, pretending that as he has received it, he has a right to paſs it; in other words, that becauſe he has careleſsly permitted an impoſition to be practiſed on himſelf, he has acquired the right of impoſing upon the reſt of the world. Another conveys falſe intimations reſpecting the nature or the intrinſic worth of an article which he ſells: and thus induces his cuſtomer to give a higher price than he would otherwiſe have conſented to pay. Another loiters away part of the time during which he has engaged to work for a maſter; and claims a whole day's wages, when in fact he has *worked* but three quarters of a day. Every one of theſe perſons injures his neighbour in his property; and breaks the commandments of God, to *do juſtly*. Your own thoughts, if you direct them to the ſubject, will

will ſupply additional examples. In all your dealings with others, remember the ſhort rule with which Chriſt has furniſhed you. *Whatſoever ye would that men ſhould do to you, do ye even ſo to them.* Aſk yourſelf in every inſtance, "Am I now acting as "I would wiſh others to act unto me?" Try yourſelf fairly by that queſtion; reſolve under the grace of God, to act as your conſcience anſwers, and you ſcarcely can fall into injuſtice.

2. Secondly: You are *to love mercy.* Mercy ſignifies Chriſtian charity in its largeſt ſenſe. It includes every thing which we mean by affection, benevolence, kindneſs, tenderneſs, mildneſs, meekneſs, patience, forgiveneſs; and by every other expreſſion, which implies good will to men. It comprehends every humane, gentle, and compaſſionate diſpoſition; as well as all thoſe actions, by which the exiſtence of ſuch diſpoſitions is to be proved. Obſerve now the difference of the terms in which God requires from us firſt juſtice, then mercy. We are to *do juſtly:* we are to *love mercy.* Not but that we are alſo to love to do juſtice. But the difference in the words of the commandment reſpecting theſe duties naturally ariſes from the difference between the duties themſelves. Juſtice admits of no degrees. We are juſt, or

we are unjuſt. If we are not perfectly juſt, we are unjuſt. If you withhold from your neighbour a ſingle penny which belongs to him; if you defraud him in any tranſaction of the ſmalleſt ſum; if you impoſe upon him ever ſo little, if you injure him in any one of his rights, though it be of all his rights, the leaſt conſiderable; you are unjuſt. God therefore ſimply commands you *to do juſtly.* Theſe words require of you to do juſtice in every particular; for otherwiſe you do unjuſtly. They comprehend every act of duty which is a branch of juſtice. They leave nothing unrequired. But mercy is in its own nature capable of gradations. Of two perſons, of each of whom it may not improperly be affirmed that he is merciful, the one may be more merciful than the other. The commandment therefore does not ſay, "Thou ſhalt do mercifully;" or, "Thou "ſhalt ſhew mercy." Had ſuch been the expreſſion, men would induſtriouſly have perſuaded themſelves that by ſmall, or moderate, or occaſional acts of mercy they ſufficiently obeyed the commandment. What is the injunction? "Thou ſhalt *love* mercy:" thy heart ſhall be conſtantly ſet on deeds of mercy: they ſhall be thy ſtudy: they ſhall be a delight unto thee. Hear with what energy of language

language, mercy in all its branches is enjoined throughout the Scriptures. *Be ye merciful, as your Father alſo is merciful. Be kindly affectioned one towards another in brotherly love; in honour preferring one another. Rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Let all bitterneſs, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil ſpeaking be put away from you with all malice. And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another. Walk in love as Chriſt loved us. Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you; bleſs them that curſe you; pray for them which deſpitefully uſe you. Be ready to diſtribute, willing to communicate. If any man ſeeth his brother have need, and ſhutteth up his bowels of compaſſion from him: how dwelleth the love of God in him? Remember the words of the Lord Jeſus, how he ſaid, It is more bleſſed to give than to receive* (*b*). Take your Bible into your hand. Examine yourſelf by theſe paſſages of holy writ. Conſider them one by one. You will thus diſcover whether you love mercy. If you truly love mercy: it will be your purſuit and your pleaſure to perform acts of mercy. You will not idly

(*b*) Luke, vi. 36. Rom. xii. 10, 15. Epheſ. iv. 31, 32, v. 2. Matth. v. 44. 1 Tim. vi. 18. 1 John, iii. 17. Acts, xx. 35.

wait until opportunities of exerciſing kindneſs may chance to force themſelves upon your notice. You will anxiouſly ſearch for them: you will delight in availing yourſelf of any one, however ſmall, which may ariſe. In every one of your fellow-creatures you will behold a brother, whom God, your Creator, formed; for whom Chriſt, your Redeemer died. The temporal welfare, the everlaſting intereſts of that brother, will be dear to your heart. You will bear with ignorance, with peeviſhneſs, with enmity, with ingratitude, as a Chriſtian. You will regard the offences of others againſt yourſelf as wiſely adapted to admoniſh you of your own infinitely greater offences againſt God. You will not conceive that you diſcharge your duty as to almſgiving by accommodating the ſcale of your gifts to ſuch a portion of your income as would remain not only when the demands of reaſonable prudence but when the claims of faſhion and pleaſure ſhould have been ſatisfied to the uttermoſt. You will habitually diſcipline and moderate your deſires, and curtail all needleſs expences; that you may have the more to give to him that needeth.

3. Thirdly: You are *to walk humbly with your God.* To walk with God, ſignifies, in the

language of Scripture, to be a faithful and zealous ſervant of God. Thus it is ſaid of Enoch, that he *walked with God: and he was not.* He was no longer to be found on earth, *for God took him.* His piety and holineſs were ſo eminent that God diſtinguiſhed him by tranſlating him alive into heaven. Again, we are told that *Noah was a juſt man, and perfect in his generation; and Noah walked with God.* And his heavenly Maſter as a ſignal reward preſerved him and his family from the deluge. We, like theſe holy men of old, and like the righteous in all ages who have trodden in their footſteps, are alſo to walk with God. And, like them, we are to walk *humbly* with our God. We are to bring our whole hearts as well as our actions into ſubjection to the divine will. If you would obtain ſalvation, you muſt become like the Iſraelite to whoſe enquiries the words of Micah were a reply, humbled to the duſt in ſorrow for your guilt, and fervently deſirous of ſubmitting to any method of reconciliation with the Majeſty of heaven. But are you like that Iſraelite, looking round for *burnt-offerings* to preſent unto the Lord? *My Son, God will provide himſelf a lamb for a burnt-offering* (*c*). Would you *give your firſt-born for your tranſgreſ-*

(*c*) Gen. xxii. 8.

ſion; the fruit of your body for the ſin of your ſoul? Not your firſt-born is the atonement: but the only begotten Son of God. His muſt be the blood wherewith you come before the Lord and bow yourſelf before the Moſt High. Look to the croſs of Chriſt, and to that alone. Diſclaim all preſumption, all boaſting, all ſelf-righteouſneſs, all dependence on your own ſtrength to will or to perform. Preſent yourſelf before God, not as a Phariſee demanding reward as a debt: not as a vaunter profeſſing to be rich and bearing payment in his hand, for a bleſſing which he would purchaſe: but as a ſinner imploring pardon and mercy through Chriſt, as otherwiſe totally unattainable, as in every point and circumſtance the free and unmerited gifts of divine grace. Look through Chriſt to the Holy Spirit for power to reſiſt temptation, for power to form good reſolutions, for power to carry them into effect. Remember that while *God reſiſteth the proud*, it is *to the humble* that *he giveth grace* (*d*). When you have done all, confeſs that you are an unprofitable ſervant to your Lord; that you have done only that which was your bounden duty. This it is to walk *humbly* with your God in the general frame and temper of your ſoul. In all the changeful ſitu-

(*d*) 1 Pet. v. 5.

ations

ations of your life evince by your conduct this characteriſtic temper of a Chriſtian. Are you in proſperity? Walk humbly with your God. Confeſs, that it is he, who of his own loving kindneſs giveth you all things richly to enjoy. Confeſs, with the Patriarch Jacob, *O Lord, I am not worthy of the leaſt of theſe thy mercies* (*e*). Let the Giver be glorified in his gifts. *Now ye are full, now ye are rich. Be it ſo. Who maketh thee to differ from another? And what haſt thou that thou didſt not receive? Now if thou didſt receive it; why doſt thou glory as if thou hadſt not received it* (*f*)? The more diſtinguiſhed is your proſperity, the more earneſt be your ſolicitude to become meek, humble, and ſober-minded. Remember that he who lifteth up, can caſt down; that he who beſtoweth can take away. Remember that thou haſt here *no continuing city*. Look at that withering flower; and behold how periſhable are all the glories which derive their nutriment from earth. Has adverſity overtaken you? Have trials and afflictions, and ſickneſſes clouded your days? Walk humbly with your God. Humble yourſelf under his chaſtiſing hand. *It is the Lord, let him do what ſeemeth him good* (*g*). Reflect on his unbounded wiſdom, his in-

(*e*) Gen. xxxii 10. (*f*) Cor. iv. 7, 8. (*g*) 1 Sam iii. 18.

exhauſtible loving-kindneſs. *What! ſhall we receive good at the hand of God; and ſhall we not receive evil* (*h*)? Knoweth he not what is fitteſt for you? Loveth he not the work of His own hand, the ſoul for which he gave His Son unto death? *Verily he chaſtiſeth us for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holineſs.* And although *no chaſtening for the preſent ſeemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheleſs afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteouſneſs unto them which are exerciſed thereby* (*i*), and walk humbly with their God? Finally, obſerve His laws with reverence; and humbly render equal obedience to them all. Preſume not to think that you may venture to neglect any commandment, which God has pronounced. Doſt thou refuſe ſubmiſſion to any one of His injunctions, and ſayeſt thou that thou walkeſt humbly with Him? Be diligent in frequenting the public worſhip of your Lord; and receive His word with humility. Slight not any opportunity of attending the holy communion, in humble and thankful remembrance of your crucified Maſter. *In every thing by prayer and ſupplication*, public and private, *let your requeſts be made known unto God* (*j*). And humbly offer up to Him all your petitions

(*h*) Job, ii. 10. (*i*) Hebr. xii. 10, 11. (*j*) Phil. iv. 6.

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in the name of the appointed Mediator and Interceſſor, Jeſus Chriſt.

III. It appears then that to the Jew and to the Chriſtian the ſum and ſubſtance of religion has ever been the ſame. To do juſtly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God in grateful dependence and univerſal obedience; this it has been, this it is, to be a ſervant of the Moſt High. The duties of juſtice and of mercy, duties placed within the ſphere of human reaſon, were developed in the Scriptures of the Old Teſtament to the Jew. Before the Chriſtian they ſtand arrayed in brighter radiance borrowed from the precepts and the example of his Lord. To the Jew the general obligation of walking humbly with his God was unfolded. The Chriſtian, ſurveying it in clearer luſtre, refers the acceſſion of light to his Saviour. But as to the greateſt of the events in the divine economy to which that general obligation pointed, the Jew was comparatively in darkneſs. He little underſtood the method, by which expiation was to be made for guilt. He looked for juſtification to his burnt offerings and ſacrifices; to *the blood of bulls and of goats, which could never take away ſin* (*k*). Through

(*k*) Hebr. x. 4.

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the veil of types and emblems he diſcerned not the true atonement. He had heard of one who ſhould ſave Iſrael. But he looked to deliverance from worldly foes, to pre-eminence over proſtrate kingdoms. He had heard of One who ſhould *redeem Iſrael from all his iniquities* (*l*). But he looked only to the fuller eſtabliſhment of the Moſaic law. He was aſſured that the Redeemer ſhould be ſtricken for the tranſgreſſion of his people; that he ſhould pour out his ſoul unto death; that he ſhould make his ſoul an offering for ſin: that he ſhould bear the ſins of many, and make interceſſion for the tranſgreſſors (*m*). But pride ſtupified his heart. Vain of his excluſive privileges, he deemed them all-ſufficient. Averſe to the *righteouſneſs of God*, he ſtood upon the *deeds of the law*. Dazzled by phantoms of temporal grandeur, he ſhut his eyes againſt the image of a ſuffering Meſſiah. To the Chriſtian theſe myſteries are revealed; theſe ſhadows are become realities. He knows that *by the deeds*, whether *of the* ceremonial or of the moral *law*, *ſhall no fleſh be juſtified in the ſight of God*. He renounces all claim to merit even in the leaſt imperfect of his works; and pleads for pardon and juſtification ſolely through the propitiatory

(*l*) Pſalm cxxx. 8. (*m*) Iſaiah, liii.

ſacrifice of the Son of God. *In Chriſt Jeſus*, contemplated by the eye of faith on the croſs, he beholds *wiſdom, and righteouſneſs and ſanctification and redemption; that, as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord* (*n*).

Survey then, my brethren, your advantages. *From him, to whom much is given, much ſhall be required* (*o*). Have you pondered this rule? Have you conſidered the conſequences of falling ſhort when tried by this ſtandard? Moſt conſpicuouſly hath God ſhewed you what is good; what he requires you to believe, and what he requires you to perform. Have you obſerved then to do juſtly? Are you upright and faithful in all your words and in all your actions, as juſtice indiſpenſably demands? You may forget juſtice: but God will not forget it. You may refuſe to render to others that which belongs to them: but he will render to you according to your works. *God, is not a man, that he ſhould lie. Hath he ſpoken, and ſhall he not do it? The Lord knoweth how to reſerve the unjuſt unto the day of judgement to be puniſhed* (*p*). He will ſurely fulfil his word, he will accompliſh his threatenings. *The hope of the unjuſt man pe-*

(*n*) 1 Cor. i. 30, 31. (*o*) Luke, xii. 48. (*p*) Numb. xxiii. 19. 2 Pet. ii. 9.

riſheth.

riſheth (*q*). He may flatter himſelf with hopes of heaven: but, as ſurely as the word of God is true, he will find himſelf among the wicked who are turned into hell. Do you love mercy? Have you not only proved yourſelf gentle, kind, tender-hearted, compaſſionate, and charitable, in your ordinary proceedings; but have you diligently ſought opportunities of exerciſing theſe Chriſtian virtues, and placed your delight in the exerciſe of them? Have you remembered the infinite and unmerited mercy of Jeſus Chriſt in dying on the croſs to make atonement for your ſins, that if through his offered grace you repent and believe and obey you may be received for His ſake into heaven? *He who ſheweth no mercy ſhall have judgement without mercy. If you forgive not men their treſpaſſes againſt you, neither will your Heavenly Father forgive your treſpaſſes* (*r*) againſt Himſelf. Do you walk humbly with your God? Do you acknowledge your utter unworthineſs in his ſight? Do you confeſs the original corruption of your nature, and your numberleſs tranſgreſſions by thought and word and deed of the righteous laws of your God? Have you fled for ſalvation to Chriſt, through whom alone man is to be ſaved? Have you taken

(*q*) Prov. xi. 7. (*r*) James, ii. 13. Matth. vi. 15.

him

him for your Lord and Maſter? Are *old things paſſed away, and all things become new?* Has the grace of the Spirit of Chriſt tranſformed you into a *new creature* (*s*)? Do you pray for the continued influence of that Spirit to enable you to ſhew yourſelf a ſincere ſervant of the Lord Jeſus? Do you humbly ſubmit your imaginations and deſires to his goſpel? Do you ſtrive to love what he commands you to love, and cheerfully to renounce what he forbids? Follow him now, that he may acknowledge you hereafter. If you are not one of his faithful followers on earth; he will deny you and caſt you out at the great day. Love Him with your whole heart, humbly and ſtedfaſtly ſerve Him here; and He will own you before aſſembled angels, and receive you for ever into glory.

(*s*) 2 Cor. v. 17.

Rd Jan 13. 1805.

SERMON XV.

On presumptuous Plans.

[Preached at the Commencement of a new Year.]

JAMES, iv. 13—17.

Go to now, ye that say; "To-day, or to-mor-
"row, we will go into such a City, and con-
"tinue there a Year, and buy, and sell, and
"get gain." Whereas ye know not what shall be on the Morrow. For what is your Life? It is, even a Vapour, that appeareth for a little Time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say; "If the Lord will, we "shall live, and do this or that." But now ye rejoice in your Boastings: all such Rejoicing is Evil. Therefore to Him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not; to Him it is Sin.

THE Scriptures abound with admonitions calculated to undeceive mankind respecting the importance and the natural effects of wealth. *If riches increase*, saith the warning

ing voice of the Old Teſtament; *ſet not your heart upon them. Let not the rich man glory in his riches: he that truſteth in his riches ſhall fall. He that truſteth in the abundance of his riches, ſtrengtheneth himſelf in his wickedneſs. Give me not riches; leſt I be full, and deny thee, and ſay, who is the Lord* (*a*)? In the New Teſtament, the aweful exclamation of our Saviour, *How hardly ſhall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God* (*b*), would of itſelf be ſufficient, after the moſt ample deductions which could be required on account of the peculiarity of the occaſion on which it was uttered, to eſtabliſh by the ſanction of his immediate authority the antecedent declarations of prophets, and the ſubſequent teſtimony of apoſtles, concerning the deſtructive influence of the idol of mankind. That *the love of money is the root of all evil*; that there is no degree, no ſpecies, of criminality to which the thirſt of gold may not prove a ſucceſsful incentive; that *they who will be rich*, they who are reſolved on the accumulation of poſſeſſions, *fall into temptation and a ſnare, and into many fooliſh and hurtful luſts which drown men in deſtruction and perdition*: that, *while ſome have coveted*

(*a*) Pſalm lxii. 10. Jer. ix. 23. Prov. xi. 28. Pſ. lii. 7. Prov. xxx. 8, 9. (*b*) Mark, x. 23.

after

after wealth, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themſelves through with many ſorrows, they have apoſtatized from Chriſtianity and overwhelmed themſelves with remorſe, anguiſh and diſpair: this is the recorded reſult of the judgement and experience of St. Paul (*c*). But among the ſacred writers there is no one more frequent or more energetic than St. James in denunciations againſt tranſgreſſors, whom riches plunge into enormities. The two leading ſources of evil, which are repreſented in the inſpired writings as derived from the influence of riches over the heart, are worldly-mindedneſs, and ſelf-dependence. Againſt theſe fortreſſes of guilt, ſometimes battered ſeparately, ſometimes aſſailed in the ſame onſet, the ſacred artillery of Scripture is unremittingly directed.

In the verſes immediately under your conſideration the apoſtle points the vehemence of his attack againſt ſelf-dependence. *Go to, now, ye that ſay, "To-day or to-morrow we will "go into ſuch a city, and continue there a year; "and buy and ſell, and get gain." Whereas, ye know not what ſhall be on the morrow.. .. For what is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vaniſheth*

(*c*) 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10.

away.

away. For that ye ought to ſay; If the Lord will, we ſhall do this or that. But now ye rejoice in your boaſtings: all ſuch rejoicing is evil. Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not; to him it is ſin.

Theſe words comprehend ſeveral leſſons highly important in themſelves, and cloſely connected with each other. My intention is to ſet them before you in order; and to apply them, one by one, under the bleſſing of God, to your edification.

I. *Go to now, ye that ſay;* "*To-day, or to-*"*morrow, we will go into ſuch a city; and con-*"*tinue there a year, and buy and ſell, and get*"*gain.*" In this paſſage St. James directs his reproof againſt that diſpoſition ſo common among men, to form diſtant and preſumptuous plans. Did you know nothing more concerning human life than is to be collected from the ordinary language which reſounds in our dwellings and our ſtreets; you might conclude that every circumſtance in this world is capable of being fixed and ſettled beforehand by us almoſt, if not altogether, to a certainty. You hear men expreſſing their purpoſes reſpecting their future proceedings in terms, which ſcarcely admit the ſuppoſition that there can be any doubt whether the

ſcheme on which they meditate will be accompliſhed. If a perſon mentions a journey which he propoſes to undertake ſome months hence; how uſual is it for him to ſpeak of it as though it were an affair placed wholly within his own power, and to be decided merely by his own inclination. If ſickneſs, or ſome other change of circumſtances, prevent him from executing his deſign: how ready is he to give way to fretfulneſs, and to adopt the language of diſappointment; as though he had experienced ſome ſtrange and unuſual event contrary to the natural courſe of juſt expectations. Others you hear ſpeaking in terms equally confident concerning projects ſtill more diſtant. One perſon informs you, that when he ſhall have employed two or three future years in making himſelf maſter of his trade or profeſſion at the place where he now reſides; he ſhall remove to ſuch a town, or into the neighbourhood of ſuch a manufactory, where like others before him, he ſhall ſpeedily acquire a fortune. Another obſerves, that after he ſhall have conducted his buſineſs until his children, who are now ſcarcely advanced beyond infancy, are able to take the management of it upon themſelves; he ſhall then withdraw from the concern, and ſhall enjoy himſelf in leiſure and retirement. Another

wearies

wearies you with a detail of the alterations which he means to carry into effect, and the manner in which he deſigns to live, when upon the death of ſome relation, at preſent neither old nor unhealthy, he ſhall inherit an addition to his eſtate. Another is occupied in laying plans for the diſpoſal of a ſucceſſion of daughters in marriage: and tells you that when he ſhall have ſettled the youngeſt, he ſhall detach himſelf from the large circle of ſociety in which he deems it neceſſary to continue until that object is attained, and ſhall remove into a more private and quiet part of the country. Theſe remote purpoſes are ſtated with deciſion and unconcern, as though they could be completed to-morrow. Or if an expreſſion, alluding to a poſſible uncertainty in human affairs, be interwoven: it is too often accompanied with a tone and a countenance which evince that it comes not from the heart; but is inſerted only to preſerve appearances. The end to which St. James intimates that theſe ſchemes are moſt commonly directed is *gain*. It is the end of the purſuits of moſt men. Our bleſſed Lord looked upon riches with an eye very different from that of the world. He ſaw, that they generally proved grievous hindrances to religion. To that memorable expreſſion, in

which he avers that, but for the grace of God with whom all things are poſſible, they would prove themſelves inſuperable obſtacles in the path of ſalvation, I have already had occaſion to refer. At another time he deſcribes riches by the names of *the Mammon of unrighteouſneſs*, *the unrighteous Mammon*; becauſe they are ſo continually abuſed to purpoſes of unrighteouſneſs, to covetouſneſs, to pride, to diſſipation, to ſenſuality, to corruption. Yet on this dangerous acquiſition what multitudes ſet their hearts! The hope of obtaining wealth, or of indulging in the enjoyment of it, enſnares men into forgetfulneſs of God, into diſregard of ſalvation, into guilty enterpriſes and purſuits, into deliberate fraud and open violence: and is one of the principal cauſes of that daring ſelf-dependence, that proud ſecurity, which encourages them preſumptuouſly to form ſchemes of diſtant execution, to utter *great ſwelling words of vanity*, and to triumph long beforehand in the ſuppoſed accompliſhment of their extravagant expectations, as though they were themſelves entruſted with the management of earth and its concerns, and exalted beyond the reach of oppoſition from their fellow-creatures and of control from above.

II. The

II. The next obſervation furniſhed by the text proves the extreme folly of ſuch preſumption. *Ye know not what ſhall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vaniſheth away. Take thine eaſe;* ſaid the rich man to his ſoul. *Thou haſt much goods laid up for many years. Eat, drink, and be merry.* But what ſaid God? *Thou fool! This night ſhall thy ſoul be required of thee* (*d*). Suppoſe your plans free from thoſe cauſes of failure, which the world, willing as it were to exclude God from the government of his own works, denominates *accidental* events. Suppoſe every precaution which prudence can deviſe to have been adopted for the furtherance of your deſigns. Suppoſe fortune, as the phraſe is, to ſmile upon you. Suppoſe every thing, to ſpeak after the manner of men, to turn out well. Have you any certainty of the fulfilment of your wiſhes? Have you the ſlighteſt aſſurance that you have in reality advanced one ſtep towards the attainment of your object? "I look not forward," you reply, "to diſtant years. The complete "ſucceſs of my undertaking is cloſe at hand. "To-morrow it will be within my graſp." *Boaſt not thyſelf of to-morrow: for thou knoweſt*

(*d*) Luke, xii. 19, 20.

not what a day may bring forth (*e*). Death comes: and in a moment sweeps away thee and thy plans for ever. *As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone: and the place thereof shall know it no more* (*f*). Can riches bribe death, or make a bargain with the tomb? *As the flower of the grass shall the rich man pass away. For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away* (*g*). During the period which has elapsed since I first undertook the office of instructing you, however imperfectly yet according to the extent of my knowledge, in the word of God and the gospel of his Son; how many schemes and projects formed by your neighbours and by your relations have been disconcerted by death! How many persons, whom in successive years I have beheld and addressed from this place, have vanished from among the children of men, and have left their stations to be filled by you! Where are now the plans to which many of them had given up their hearts; the confident expectations

(*e*) Prov. xxvii. 1. (*f*) Psalm ciii. 15, 16. (*g*) James, i. 10, 11.

of

of worldly acquisitions which occupied their bosoms; the health and length of days which they had promised themselves that they should enjoy! All are utterly at an end. The plans, the expectations, the promises are no more. And they who formed and cherished them, for ever removed into another state of being, are awaiting a *resurrection of life*, or a *resurrection of damnation*. If other warnings are ineffectual; receive instruction from your departed parents and near kindred. Think what would be the advice which they would now convey to your ears, were it possible that from their present abode they could hold communication with you. *For what is your life? Is it not a vapour that passeth away?* Who is there among us that can assure himself that he shall see the close of the year, which is now begun? Who is there among us, my brethren, that can promise to himself that he shall be found to-morrow in the land of the living? We may all be alive to-morrow. But that we who are now assembled together shall not all be alive when twelve months shall have performed their course, is as nearly certain as any thing is upon earth. If but one of us shall before that time be numbered with the dead: who is that person? Every one of us

may look up to heaven in aweful ſuſpenſe, and ſay, *Lord! is it I?* Learn then through the grace of God *ſo to number your days, that you may apply your hearts unto wiſdom* (*b*). Form no plans in your own ſtrength. Form no diſtant plans. Form one plan, and one plan only, with ſolicitude: and let that plan be to be religious. On earth you are ſojourners and pilgrims. Of the world to come you will be inhabitants for ever. *The things that are ſeen are temporal; the things that are not ſeen are eternal* (*i*). If you are not yet a true ſervant of Chriſt Jeſus; if you have not yet that genuine faith which worketh by love; if it be not yet your *meat and drink*, your ſupport and your comfort, ſtedfaſtly to live unto God and unto Chriſt, habitually to ſtrive in every particular to perform at all hazards as an obedient and affectionate ſon the will of your heavenly Father: ſeek the grace of God while yet it may be found. The preſent year may look upon your grave.

III. The apoſtle, in the next place, teaches us what is the frame of mind, with which all our purpoſes ſhould be formed. *Ye ought to ſay; If the Lord will, we ſhall do this or that.* In all our undertakings, in all our in-

(*b*) Pſalm, xc. 12. (*i*) 2 Cor. iv. 18.

tentions

tentions and our proſpects, let us remember that God is the Maſter, that we are the ſervants; that we are nothing, that God is every thing. He ſitteth in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all. He lifteth up, and he caſteth down: the diſpoſal of the lot is with Him: and in his hands are the iſſues of life and death. He is the God of all power. To Him we ought in all things cheerfully to ſubmit ourſelves. For what can Man do againſt Him? What can man do without Him? How ſhall any plan take effect but by his ſupport? How ſhall any plan fail, if it be ſupported by Omnipotence? He is the God of all wiſdom. Man is loſt in ignorance. He knows not what objects to purſue. He knows not what meaſures will contribute to the ſucceſs of his purſuit. How ſhall he chooſe aright? How ſhall he direct his ſteps aright? By committing himſelf to his Maker. Set your affections on thoſe objects, which God in his holy word points out as alone worthy of a Chriſtian's regard. Purſue them on thoſe principles, and by thoſe methods, which the ſame holy word enjoins as alone lawful to a Chriſtian. Then will the Spirit of Chriſt, the Spirit of Wiſdom, maintain you under his unerring guidance. God is the God of all goodneſs. It is he who of his own free bounty has

has beſtowed upon you life, and all its bleſſings. What good gift is there, which he is not ready to beſtow upon you? *He who ſpared not his own Son, but delivered Him up for us all: how ſhall he not with Him alſo freely give us all things* (*j*)? Will you not truſt your intereſts, preſent and future, in the hands of your Creator, your Preſerver, your Redeemer? Let his power, his wiſdom, his love be your confidence. Let his pleaſure be your delight. When you meditate upon any deſign; let it be the language not merely of your lips, but of your heart, "*If the Lord* "*will*, my purpoſe will be eſtabliſhed." Entertain not a wiſh that it ſhould be accompliſhed, unleſs it be wholly conformable to the will of God. *Commit thy way unto the Lord, and he ſhall bring it to paſs* (*k*); if it be for thy good that it ſhould be brought to paſs. Or if he foreſees that its accompliſhment would not be for thine advantage; he ſhall provide for thee real bleſſings in the place of that imaginary good, that actual evil, which thou hadſt ignorantly choſen for thyſelf.

IV. The apoſtle proceeds to admoniſh us, that the preſumption with which men look forward to the accompliſhment of diſtant

(*j*) Rom. viii. 32. (*k*) Pſalm xxxvii. 5.

plans

plans as to certain events, preſumption which he had already ſhewn to be the height of folly, is equally to be ſtigmatiſed as guilt. *But now ye rejoice in your boaſtings: all ſuch rejoicing is evil.* The preſumptuous men, to whom his epiſtle was in the firſt inſtance addreſſed, prided themſelves in their ſelf-dependence; and openly took pleaſure and triumphed in their vain-glorious boaſtings. Well would it have been for the Chriſtian world, if the ſpirit of thoſe vaunters had died with them! Well is it for yourſelves, if no portion of it has deſcended unto you! Every degree, even the ſmalleſt degree, of ſuch triumph, of ſuch confidence, is ſin. For what is it, but to exalt man againſt his Maker; to gratify human arrogance at the expence of the glory of God? Is it not ſin to refuſe unequivocally to ſubmit yourſelf to the government of infinite power: of that infinite power which moulded you out of nothing, and conferred upon you thoſe very faculties which you are employing as inſtruments of diſobedience? Is it not ſin to refuſe to reſign yourſelf to the direction of infinite wiſdom: of that infinite wiſdom which has unceaſingly diſplayed itſelf in providing for your welfare; and has deviſed for your deliverance from ſin and death eternal, a plan of redemption ſo ſtupendous

as

as to fill the hoſts of heaven with admiration and amazement? Is it not ſin to refuſe joyfully to acquieſce in the determinations of infinite goodneſs: of that infinite goodneſs which is every moment miniſtering to your comfort; which drew down the Son of the Moſt High from the boſom of the Father, to die for you, while you were yet enemies, that He might reconcile you to God by His blood? Where is rebellion, where is pride, where is ingratitude, if not here? Where is your faith in God, if you heſitate unreſervedly to confide in Him? Where is your reverence for Him, if you ſcruple any token of obedience? Where is your humility, if you abaſe not your own judgement before His counſels? Where is your reſignation, if you ſurrender not all your wiſhes to His choice? Where is your patience, if you are not content to await His pleaſure? Where is your fortitude, if you ſhrink from bearing the abſence of that which He ſees fit to withhold, the loſs of that which He ſees fit to take away? Where is your love for Chriſt, if you decline any ſubmiſſion, any ſacrifice, for His ſake? Where is the ſpirit of a Chriſtian, if you daringly form plans, or boaſtfully proclaim them, as though you were independent of God? Where is the imitation of your Lord,

Lord, if you refuſe to pray, like Him, in the ſincerity of your ſoul; *Father! Not my will but thine be done?*

V. The inſpired penman, having thus ſet forth the proneneſs of men preſumptuouſly to promiſe to themſelves the ſucceſs of diſtant ſchemes and undertakings, the folly and the ſinfulneſs of ſuch conduct, and the ſubmiſſive and pious temper of mind with which the plans and purpoſes of a Chriſtian muſt be accompanied; concludes the ſubject with a moſt important admonition. *Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is ſin.* The knowledge of our duty, ſince the Giver of good gifts offers to all men ability to perform that which they know him to require, takes away all pretences for not performing it, and leaves us without excuſe. *If I had not come and ſpoken unto them,* ſaid Chriſt, *they had not had ſin: but now they have no cloke for their ſin. If ye were blind;* if you had not the natural capacity of underſtanding your duty, or if you had never poſſeſſed the means of aſcertaining the will of God; *ye ſhould have no ſin. But now ye ſay, We ſee: therefore your ſin remaineth* (*l*). Ignorance, not if it be wilful, but if it be un-

(*l*) John, ix. 41. xv. 22.

avoidable,

avoidable, is an apology for neglect and tranſgreſſion. The times of ſuch ignorance God may have winked at. But now commands he every man every where to repent. You may have been, and it is probable that moſt of you have been, of the number of thoſe who have again and again committed that very ſin, concerning which St. James diſcourſes in the paſſage which you have heard. Reflect, and call yourſelves to an account. Conſider whether you have not indulged yourſelves in the habit of laying plans including a large ſpace of time, and of looking forward to expected events ſtill at a diſtance, without a due and lively ſenſe of the uncertainty and the ſhortneſs of life, the vanity of all worldly wiſdom, and the perpetual changes, impoſſible to be foreſeen by man, to which all human affairs are every moment expoſed; in a word, without a faithful and lively recollection of the overruling providence of God, a cheerful ſubmiſſion to His counſels, and a grateful dependence on Him alone for ſtrength, protection, and ſucceſs. Conſider whether your language, when you have communicated your deſigns to others, has not been a counterpart, in ſpirit if not in expreſſion, to that of the boaſters in the days of St. James, who arrogantly declared their intentions of going to

traffic

traffic for a year in this or in that city with as much confidence as though there had not existed a God to controul or to cut them off. Consider whether, if on such occasions you have introduced some mention of reference to the divine pleasure and permission, the expression of resignation and dependence has flowed warmly from your heart; or has been a cold and formal phrase produced only to sustain a decorous appearance among men. Does your conscience reply that in spirit and in language you have resembled those children of pride? I fear that you have little to plead in extenuation on the ground of ignorance. In this country, and in your situation, you cannot have remained venially ignorant of your duty. In this country, and in your situation, in proportion as you have been ignorant, you have been ignorant wilfully. Humble yourselves therefore and repent. In the sincerity of humiliation and penitence supplicate the Father of mercies, that through the atonement and the intercession of the Lord Jesus your sin may be blotted out: that for His sake the presumptuous devices of your heart and the boastful language of your lips may be forgiven; and that grace may be bestowed upon you by the Holy Spirit to preserve you from repeat-

ing the offence. By whatever clouds your mind may heretofore have been obscured, you now know *that which is good:* and, if you do it not, to you it is sin. Be conscientious in acting conformably to the full extent of your knowledge. Be careful for nothing, except faith and holiness. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all things essential to your earthly welfare shall be added unto you. Stretch not your thoughts forward to remote plans of worldly interest. In all your plans remember that the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth, and distributeth all things to every man severally as He will. Leave all things in His hands, with gratitude for His past mercies, with undoubting reliance on His wisdom and his love. In discoursing concerning your future purposes, *be not ashamed when it concerneth thy soul.* Let it be visible, unostentatiously yet clearly visible, that you refer and commit every event to the good pleasure of your Father who is in heaven. Why *takest thou thought*, why art thou disquieted with anxiety; *for the morrow? The morrow shall take thought for the things of itself.* Why strainest thou thine aching eyes in speculating on airy phantoms? Why buildest thou for thyself visionary palaces amidst the vapours that hang on the extremity

of the sky? Thou hast here no continuing city. Seek one to come. Seek *an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens: a city having foundations, whose builder and maker is God* (*m*).

Finally; remember that the concluding admonition which St. James has so pertinently applied to the immediate subject of his discourse, is in its nature a general precept, applicable to every branch and circumstance of duty. Whether faith or practice, whether doctrines to be received, tempers to be cherished, or actions to be performed, be in question: whether to govern or to serve, to labour or to endure, to glorify God through the Lord Jesus by evil report or by good report, by life or by death, be the office to which the Christian is called forth: it is equally and universally true, that, *to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin.* Restrict not to special occasions, circumscribe not by unwarranted limitations, a precept comprehensive as the sphere of human agency. Are you weary of well-doing? Are you solicitous to curtail the required tribute of obedience? Are you inclined to cherish ignorance, or to dissemble knowledge, if you may thus escape from the obligation of rendering an additional testimony

(*m*) 2 Cor. v. 1. Hebr. xi. 10.

of love and gratitude to God? Is there any love, any gratitude, in the boſom where ſuch thoughts are harboured? Is there any ſenſe of equity in that boſom? Has thy Creator merited thus at thine hand? Has He been a niggard in His mercies to thee? Has He pared away from thy portion every ſuperfluity of comfort? When thou waſt in bondage to ſin and death eternal, did His power make no exertion, did His wiſdom deviſe no counſel, did His goodneſs ſuggeſt no ſacrifice, for thy ſake? Out of thine own mouth ſhalt thou be judged, thou wicked ſervant! Is this *the free-will offering* of the heart? Is this to ſerve God *not grudgingly, and* as it were *of neceſſity?* What is the language of genuine gratitude, of genuine love? *I am thine: I have longed after thy precepts. With my whole heart have I ſought thee. In the path of thy commandments do I delight. Thy word is very pure: therefore thy ſervant loveth it. I love thy commandments above gold, yea above fine gold. I rejoice at thy word as one that findeth great ſpoil. I eſteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right. All thy commandments are righteouſneſs. O that my ways were directed to keep thy ſtatutes! Then ſhall I not be aſhamed, when I have reſpect unto all thy commandments* (*n*).

(*n*) Pſ. cxix. 5, 6. 10. 35. 40. 94. 127, 128. 140. 162. 172.

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If you lay claim to the denomination of a disciple of Jesus Christ, be it in every point and on every occasion your main concern to fulfil your known duty to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and your duty to your neighbour, as a branch of your duty to God. Without that stedfast concern, you possess not the disposition of a Christian. If, through the renovating influence of divine grace, you have attained by effectual prayer this regenerate frame of soul; and if, through the same grace, you hold it fast unto the end: then are you *in Christ, a new creature.* Then have you scriptural authority for your hopes that, whether in the course of the present year you shall be numbered with your fathers, or shall be preserved unto the dawning of another, you shall be found of your Lord in peace, and be accepted through the righteousness of Christ.

SERMON XVI.

On the Guilt and the Conſequences of deſpiſing the Divine Threatenings.

GENESIS, xix. 14.

And Lot went out, and ſpake unto his Sons-in-law, which married his Daughters, and ſaid: "Up; get you out of this Place: for "the Lord will deſtroy this City." But he ſeemed as one that mocked unto his Sons-in-law.

MAN, fallen from original holineſs, darkened in his underſtanding and perverted in his deſires, transforms bleſſings into evils. The means of happineſs conſigned by the divine goodneſs to his application become, under his blind and unhallowed management, cauſes and inſtruments of ruin. The food, by which his body is to be ſuſtained in health and

and vigour, he employs to pamper intemperance; and corrupts into a ſource of diſeaſe, of weakneſs, of anguiſh, of decay. From the word of God, the bread of life, he contrives to extract poiſon. Expert in deviſing miſchief againſt himſelf, he draws from the fountain of pure doctrine and unſullied righteouſneſs imaginary cordials for unchriſtian opinions, and imaginary palliatives for unchriſtian practices. *Unlearned and unſtable, he wreſts* at preſent, as in the days of St. Peter, *the Scriptures to his own deſtruction.* In no inſtance is the depraved perverſeneſs of the human mind more glaring than in the abuſe of the long-ſuffering mercy of God. The divine forbearance, deferring from time to time the already protracted vengeance; prolonging the hitherto neglected interval of probation; raiſing again and again with louder ſummons the hitherto unregarded call to repentance; renewing and enlarging the hitherto deſpiſed means and waſted opportunities of grace: is beheld as miniſtering encouragement to careleſſneſs in ſin. Man, obſtinately inſenſible to the accuſtomed diſpenſations of mercy, hardens himſelf againſt extraordinary interpoſitions of Providence: and will not repent and believe, *though one ſhould riſe from the dead*, nor though an angel ſhould

bear to him a ſpecial warning from the Moſt High.

Among the different nations which, in the days of Abraham, inhabited the land of Canaan, the people of Sodom and Gomorrah were diſtinguiſhed by ſuperiority in wickedneſs. The cry of the cities aroſe unto heaven; and called for vengeance on the grievouſneſs of their ſin. The long-ſuffering of God was exhauſted: the ſeaſon of trial was fulfilled: the hour of mercy was paſt: the ſtorm of fire and brimſtone was ready to deſcend. Among theſe habitations of guilt, Lot, the nephew of Abraham, had been unhappily induced, by the fruitfulneſs of the ſurrounding country, to take up his abode. He was *a juſt and righteous man*, ſaith St. Peter; and *in ſeeing and hearing vexed his righteous ſoul from day to day with their unlawful deeds* (*a*). In conſideration of his general righteouſneſs, and from tender regard to Abraham, God mercifully pardoned the criminal conduct of Lot in continuing to dwell in ſo impious a region; and determined by a ſpecial interpoſition of providential grace to ſend him forth from the impending deſtruction. The two angels, the miniſters of divine wrath, ſaid unto Lot; *Haſt thou any*

(*a*) 2 Pet. ii. 7, 8.

here

here beſides? Son-in-law, and thy ſons, and thy daughters, and whatſoever thou haſt in the city, bring them out of this place. For we will deſtroy this place: becauſe the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord; and the Lord hath ſent us to deſtroy it. These words filled Lot with diſmay. That his wife and his unmarried daughters, inhabitants of his own houſe, and accuſtomed to look up to him for direction, would obediently accompany his flight, might be no preſumptuous expectation. But for his ſons-in-law, dwelling apart in houſes of their own, and free from his control as to the guidance of their perſonal conduct and that of their families, his heart trembled. He went out and ſpake unto them, and ſaid, *Up; get you out of this place: for the Lord will deſtroy this city.* How was the exhortation received? *He ſeemed as one that mocked unto his ſons-in-law!* His *words ſeemed unto them as idle tales: and they believed them not.* They beheld terror painted in his countenance: they beheld the anxious earneſtneſs of his demeanour: they heard him announce nothing leſs than utter deſtruction: they heard him announce it ſolemnly in the name of God. What was the effect? Hardened by the deceitfulneſs of ſin, they turned from him as an unwelcome diſturber of their tranquillity, a trou-

bleſome and unſeaſonable interrupter of their pleaſures. They regarded him as a dreamer; a ſelf-appointed prophet of evil tidings; a gloomy and over-righteous enthuſiaſt, fearing where no fear was, and needleſsly tormenting himſelf and others by diſcourſing of the anger of God, when no ſuch anger exiſted, and of judgements and overwhelming vengeance never deſtined to take place. *He ſeemed unto them as one that mocked.* They deſpiſed his counſel: they refuſed to fly for deliverance from that ſeat of corruption: and within the ſpace of very few hours, they periſhed in the univerſal deſtruction of the guilty land.

I proceed, in humble reliance on the divine bleſſing, by which alone religious inſtruction, whether public or private, is rendered efficacious, to apply for your edification thoſe circumſtances in the hiſtory of Lot and his ſons-in-law, which are particularly mentioned in the text.

Perhaps, however, you may be diſpoſed to ſay within yourſelves; "Why repreſent "as applicable to us, the caſe of the moſt de- "teſtable tranſgreſſors whom the world has "witneſſed? Are we, like unto them, ſinners "above all? Are we the by-word and ſcandal "of the land? Are we, beyond all others, "notorious for diſobeying and diſregarding "reli-

" religion?" God forbid. But were not all things, which were written aforetime in the Scriptures, written for our learning? Is it foreign to the purpoſe, for which we are aſſembled, to ſet before you any example of divine indignation poured out upon wickedneſs? Do not two of the apoſtles of Chriſt, St. Peter and St. Jude, apply this very example to you, and to all mankind? Do they not aver that Sodom and Gomorrah, and the neighbouring cities, condemned with an overthrow, turned into aſhes, and ſuffering the vengeance of eternal fire, are ſet forth for an enſample unto all that afterwards ſhall live ungodly; an enſample that all who ſhall thenceforth live ungodly ſhall be reſerved unto the day of judgement to be puniſhed (*b*)? Does not our Saviour himſelf apply to you and to all men this identical example? Does he not ſolemnly affirm to his diſciples concerning all who ſhould not hear and receive their words; and conſequently concerning all who ſhould not receive and obey the goſpel, whoever may be the preacher of it; that in the day of Judgement it ſhall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah, than for them (*c*)?

(*b*) 2 Pet. ii. 6—9. Jude, 7. (*c*) Matth. x. 15.

I. Let

I. Let us in the firſt place attend to the exhortation addreſſed by Lot to his ſons-in-law: *Up; get you out of this place: for the Lord will deſtroy this city.*

Conſider what was the ſituation of theſe men. They dwelt in a city ſubject to the dominion of ſin. They had conſtantly before their eyes the example of numbers living without the fear of God, and in the groſſeſt diſobedience to His holy commandments. They were continually expoſed to the danger of being rendered, by becoming familiar with wickedneſs, inſenſible of the heinous guilt of offending God. They dwelt in a city which in conſequence of its ſinfulneſs deſerved immediate deſtruction; in a city which, when time and opportunity abundantly ſufficient for trial and repentance had been afforded, was devoted to immediate deſtruction. The divine mercy ſtill extended to them one delay, one opportunity, one warning more. "To-day, if ye will hear "my voice, harden not your hearts. Flee "for your lives. If you linger, you are un- "done. Get you out of this city; for the "Lord will deſtroy it. Come out of this "city, that ye receive not of her ſins, and "that ye be not partakers of her plagues."

Such

Such was the admonition, ſuch the injunction, which God delivered by His angels to the ſons-in-law of Lot.

Is there not a real, is there not a near reſemblance between the outward condition of thoſe unhappy men and your own? You dwell in a world which the Scriptures pronounce to be under the dominion of ſin; a world ſubject to the power of Satan, the *prince of this world*, the *God of this world*; a world to which you are not to belong, a world to which you are not to be conformed, a world which you are not to love, a world to which you are to be crucified, a world whoſe friendſhip is enmity with God. You, like the ſons-in-law of Lot, are inceſſantly obnoxious to the contagion of peſtilent example. You are encircled by multitudes living in wickedneſs; regardleſs of God, tranſgreſſing His commandments, neglecting His ordinances, wilfully ignorant of His written word, profaners of His day and of His name. With perſons of this deſcription you are conſtrained, more or leſs, by the buſineſs of life to aſſociate. You witneſs their practices; you hear their ſentiments; you become converſant with their principles. To the infectious influence of theſe practices, of theſe ſentiments, of theſe principles, you are expoſed

poſed day by day. You dwell in a world deſerving of deſtruction; and condemned, if the appointed ſeaſon of repentance ſhall have paſſed away in vain, to deſtruction for ever and ever, to the vengeance of eternal fire. To you, as to the ſons-in-law of Lot, life and the means of ſalvation are afforded. To you the exhortation is ſtill addreſſed; "Ariſe, "and flee for your lives. Flee from the "wrath to come. Save yourſelves from this "untoward generation. Come forth, and "be ye ſeparate. Keep yourſelves unſpotted "from the world, that ye be not condemned "with the world."

Such then is your ſituation. Such is the ſituation of every one, who hears the ſound of the goſpel. Contagion ſurrounds you: deſtruction lies before you. You are defiled, miſerable and helpleſs. Yet ſtill there is a call of mercy; ſtill there is a way to eſcape. The God whom you have offended places deliverance within your reach. The Son of God becomes man, and gives his life to purchaſe your ſalvation. He commands, he invites, he encourages you to fly to Him for ſalvation. He promiſes to you not only the pardon of ſin, not only the enlightening and ſupporting grace of the Holy Ghoſt; but a crown of glory that fadeth not away, a king-

a kingdom of bleſſedneſs in his preſence, at his right-hand, throughout eternity. This is the bleſſed hope which he ſets before you, provided that your life on earth be dedicated to Him; that you renounce the world the fleſh, and the devil; that you live not unto yourſelves, but unto Him who died for you. At the ſame time He forewarns you in terms as ſtrong as language can ſupply that, if you refuſe his offered grace, the puniſhment into which the ſentence of divine juſtice is prepared to plunge you will be proportioned to the happineſs which you have obſtinately and ungratefully renounced: that there remaineth no more ſacrifice for ſin: there remaineth nothing for you to eternity but wrath, tribulation and anguiſh, weeping and wailing and gnaſhing of teeth; the lake of which the burning flood wherein Sodom and Gomorrah were engulphed was an emblem, the lake of fire and brimſtone, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is never quenched.

II. Conſider, in the next place, the manner in which the ſons in law of Lot received his aweful admonition.

He ſeemed unto them as one that mocked. Their conduct diſcloſes to us their character. They had evidently ſet their hearts on the

worldly advantages which, in in their apprehenſion, attended the place where they reſided: and they made little account of its wickedneſs. They ſaw that the ſurrounding country, even all the plain of Jordan, was well watered and luxuriant; offering abundant paſturage at all ſeaſons for their flocks and herds; and promiſing a great and continual increaſe of wealth. They beheld with complacency the licentious manners of the city devoted to conſtant revellings and riot. Like the men of Athens when St. Paul diſcourſed of Jeſus and the reſurrection; "*Thou* "*bringeſt*," ſaid they to their father, "*ſtrange* "*things to our ears.*" When he deſcribed to them the ſudden appearance of the angels; they perhaps exclaimed, like Feſtus, when Paul related the manifeſtation from Heaven of Jeſus Chriſt for his converſion, "*Thou art* "*beſide thyſelf: much learning doth make thee* "*mad.*" When he teſtified to them, that, God was about to overwhelm the city with terrible and extraordinary judgements: they probably replied in language like that of the ſcoffers mentioned by St. Peter; "*Where is the* "*promiſe of his coming? For all things conti-* "*nue as they were from the beginning of the* "*creation.*" The love of profit, or of pleaſure, blinded their underſtandings and ſeared their

their conſciences. They were puffed up with ſelf-conceit. They were hardened in unbelief. They treated the meſſenger, whom God had commiſſioned to warn them of their danger, and to point out the method of eſcape, as one that was ignorant or an impoſtor; as one who was himſelf deceived, or deſirous of impoſing upon them; as one who pretended to knowledge beyond his reach, and gave a falſe repreſentation of his Maſter's will. They took no pains to enquire and examine into the truth of Lot's declarations. They did not return with him to his houſe to ſatisfy themſelves whether in reality two angels were there; whether any communication as to the purpoſes of God had been vouchſafed to their father-in-law; whether the city, as he affirmed, was about to be deſtroyed. They liſtened to him with careleſſneſs and contempt. His meſſage did not ſuit their inclinations and their prejudices: and they at once rejected and deſpiſed the monitor, and the warning.

My brethren! In many reſpects the conduct of a large portion of the world bears at this day a cloſe reſemblance to that of the ſons-in-law of Lot, and ariſes from the ſame principles. When the great doctrines of the goſpel are propoſed as comprehending and diſcloſing the appointed

method of ſalvation; what numbers diſregard or deſpiſe them! When the holy commandments of God are explained and enforced as indiſpenſably and in every particular binding upon every man; what numbers withhold their aſſent from the ſtrictneſs of ſuch interpretations of the Scriptures! When the terrors of the world to come are diſplayed, when the wrath and vengeance of God, the everlaſting flames of Hell, are revealed againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men: what numbers refuſe to credit the tremendous truth! The miniſter of the goſpel ſeemeth unto them as one that mocketh. Many ſcruple not openly to treat as idle tales propoſitions ſo little indulgent to ſelf-righteouſneſs, to unholy deeds, to pride of underſtanding, to ſlight ideas of the guilt of ſin, to blind and arrogant ſpeculations concerning the nature and the extent of divine mercy. They profeſs that, for their part, they think it ſufficient to receive the promiſes of redemption in a general acceptation, without buſying themſelves with curious enquiries into particulars: that they diſcern not the neceſſity of regarding and of believing that minutely detailed account of the nature and office of Chriſt, which others appear ſo deſirous of obtruding upon them:

that

that they look not to niceties of faith, but to regularity of conduct: that, as to holineſs, man is frail and God is merciful: that, without pretending to that unattainable righteouſneſs which is pronounced from pulpits and in books of divinity to be eſſential to ſalvation, righteouſneſs which would put a ſtop to all the neceſſary dealings of life and all the tranſactions and intercourſe of the world, they doubt not but that they ſhall on the whole lead ſuch reſpectable lives as will entitle them, through the help of Chriſt making up their deficiencies, to the kingdom of heaven: and that for ſuch perſons as by groſs wickedneſs ſhall altogether fall ſhort of heaven, the goodneſs of God will certainly provide ſome puniſhment more moderate and more reaſonable than that which the unrelenting ſeverity of learned enquirers imagines itſelf, and is glad to imagine itſelf, to have diſcovered in the New Teſtament. Such are the ſcornful and daring murmurs, the *great ſwelling words*, of many, who, while they call themſelves followers of Chriſt, nouriſh the temper and ſpirit of unbelievers. Others, leſs bold in their averſion to the truth as it is in Jeſus, are in their hearts little leſs removed than the ſcoffers already mentioned from an humble ſubmiſſion to the doctrines and com-

mandments, and an humble belief of the threatenings, recorded in the word of God. How does this fact appear? By the beſt evidence: by the life and actions. The tree is known by its fruit. Look at the fruits of theſe men. When you ſee perſons paying no practical regard to the declarations of the Almighty: what is this but to treat his declarations as an idle tale? When you ſee a man truſting for ſalvation principally to ſuppoſed merits of his own: is it not plain that he treats as an idle tale the fundamental doctrine of the goſpel, that ſalvation is purchaſed entirely by the atonement of Chriſt; that it is to be ſought only through faith in His blood; and that good works, though indiſpenſably required of every Chriſtian, are valuable only as fruits and proofs of faith, not as being themſelves pure in the ſight of God, and ſtill leſs as poſſeſſing any power of buying off the puniſhment due to tranſgreſſion? When you ſee a man confidently depending on his own ſtrength for ability to ſerve God acceptably: does he not prove that he treats as an idle tale the unequivocal aſſertions both of the Old and of the New Teſtament, that of ourſelves we can do nothing which is good; that by nature we are corrupt, and enemies to God; that it is God who

who worketh in us both to will and to do that which is right; that we cannot be preſerved for a ſingle moment in faith and holineſs but by the ſanctifying grace of the Holy Ghoſt? When you ſee a perſon, though abſtaining from ſome ſins, wilfully perſiſting in others: is it not evident that he treats as an idle tale thoſe many warnings in the Scriptures, that any one criminal habit, whether it be drunkenneſs, or uncleanneſs, or theft, or covetouſneſs, or envy, or lying, or malice, or any other ſin, wilfully and obſtinately indulged, will plunge him into hell? When you ſee a perſon as it were defying the anger of God by careleſs diſobedience: is it not manifeſt that in practice he treats as an idle tale the ſentence of everlaſting damnation, everlaſting fire, the worm that never dies, the flame that never ſhall be quenched? Surely to ſuch men the Lord God Omnipotent, the Creator, the King, and the Judge of the univerſe, ſeemeth as one that mocketh!

III. Conſider, in the third place, the conſequences of treating as an idle tale, as the words of one that mocketh, the declarations of Almighty God.

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatſoever a man ſoweth, that ſhall he alſo reap. Let God be true, but every man a liar. Thy word, O God, is true from the beginning. Hath He ſpoken; and ſhall He not do it? Brethren, we have not followed cunningly deviſed fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. Knowing the terror of the Lord, we perſuade men (*d*).

Enquire now of the days which are gone what has been the end of all thoſe, who in paſt ages have diſregarded the denunciations of God. Let God be the judge between you, and thoſe who admoniſh you in His name. Let God by His paſt diſpenſations be the interpreter of His own word. When our firſt parents liſtened in paradiſe to the enſnaring queſtion of the Tempter, *Yea; hath God ſaid, ye ſhall not eat of every tree of the garden:* when, giving ear to his confident aſſertion, *ye ſhall not ſurely die*, they ventured to conſider the ſentence of death as a judgement not deſigned to be carried into execution: what was the conſequence? They brought ruin upon themſelves and upon their

(*d*) Gal. vi. 7. Rom. iii. 4. Pſ. cxix. 160. Numb. xxiii. 19. 2 Pet. i. 16. 2 Cor. v. 11.

poſterity.

poſterity. When Noah admoniſhed the world that the Spirit of God would ſtill ſtrive with ſinful man only during the period of an hundred and twenty years vouchſafed for trial and repentance: when that Preacher of Righteouſneſs ſeemed unto them as one that mocked: what was the end of the unbelievers? The deluge came at its appointed hour, and ſwept them to deſtruction. When the ſons-in-law of Lot made light of the threatenings of God: what was the event? They were overwhelmed at ſun-riſe by the tempeſt of fire and brimſtone. When Pharaoh cried, *Who is the Lord, that I ſhould obey his voice?* When he hardened his heart, and gave no credit to the warnings of Moſes: did God forbear to fulfil his word? Plague after plague overtook the king of Egypt: till having ſeen his country laid waſte by miracles of divine vengeance, and his own firſt-born, together with the firſt-born of all his people, cut off in a ſingle night, he periſhed with his mighty hoſt in the Red Sea. When the Jews in the days of Jeremiah ſhut their ears againſt his meſſage from Jehovah, that the city of Jeruſalem ſhould be deſtroyed by Nebuchadnezzar: did the words of the prophet prove an idle tale? The Chaldean army took the city, and burned it to the

ground. When Nebuchadnezzar himſelf in the pride of his heart deſpiſed the impending judgements revealed to him by Daniel: did they fail of coming to paſs? At the end of twelve months, a voice from heaven was heard proclaiming that the hour was come; and the thing was fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: the kingdom was taken from him, and he was driven from men, and did eat graſs as oxen, and his dwelling was with the beaſts of the field. When the Jews in later times heard from the mouth of Jeſus Chriſt that of their beloved city not one ſtone ſhould be left upon another: when the Son of God ſeemed as one that mocked to the people whom he came to ſave; what was the reſult? The Roman armies advanced, and miſerably deſtroyed thoſe ſinners, and took away their place and nation. With all theſe examples before you, do you treat the words of God as idle tales, and hope to eſcape? In the fate of theſe deſpiſers do you not read your own? Has the Omnipotent poured out upon all others the vengeance, which He has threatened againſt the impenitent and unbelieving; and ſhall He not pour it forth upon you? For your ſake alone will He abrogate His word? For your ſake alone will He annul His laws eſtabliſhed from eternity unto

unto eternity? Deal plainly with yourſelves. Search out and ſift your imaginations. Aſcertain what is that twig of hope to which you are clinging. Bring forth to the teſt of ſcriptural examination the ſecret ſupport, be it what it may, which buoys you up with expectations that there ſhall at leaſt be a partial remiſſion of the doom denounced againſt guilt. *Yea and why even of yourſelves judge ye not what is right* (*e*)*?* Bring it forth to a teſt which you behold with more complacent eyes, the teſt of reaſon. Is it ignorance that you aſcribe to the Omniſcient? Do you preſume that He, to whom the future is naked as the paſt, perceives not as yet His own purpoſes? From ſuch a deluſion folly itſelf turns aſide. It is not on ſuch a plank that you truſt to ſurvive ſhipwreck. Do you then flatter yourſelf that He *with whom there is no variableneſs nor ſhadow of turning*, He who is *the ſame yeſterday, and to-day, and for ever*, will ſuddenly exchange ſtedfaſtneſs for inconſtancy, and aboliſh His fixed and promulgated decree? You abjure this madneſs. "If the deſtruction," you exclaim, "of the "ſinner be indiſputable until fickleneſs can "be imputed to the Moſt High; there re-"maineth no refuge from deſpair." And

(*e*) Luke, xii. 57.

what refuge from deſpair remaineth to the perſevering ſinner? Produce your hidden conſolation. Diſcloſe the bottom of your heart. Tardy and reluctant as is the confeſſion, it is at length extracted. You conceive that the Deity has decreed from the beginning to relax from His threatened judgements: that while, for the purpoſe of aweing men into righteouſneſs, vengeance arrayed in fiery terrors aſſumes her ſeat in the clouds; mercy is at hand to avert the moſt formidable of her bolts, and to ſhield the offender from all but that lighter chaſtiſement, the fear of which would have been inadequate to the prevention of tranſgreſſions. Compare then thy theory, thou who adventureſt to theoriſe concerning the counſels of thy God; compare thy theory with facts. If in the denunciations of future vengeance a part only be intended for accompliſhment, while the reſidue is empty air: whence is it that paſt menaces have been fulfilled to the uttermoſt? Why was the old world deſtroyed by the flood? Why were Sodom and Gomorrah and the incredulous ſons-in-law of Lot overwhelmed? Why was Pharaoh cut off? Why did the Egyptian hoſt periſh to a man? Why was Jeruſalem delivered unto Nebuchadnezzar to be uprooted from the foundations? Why was

the

the king of Babylon driven out to dwell and eat graſs with oxen? Why were the Jews extirpated by the Romans from their native land? Proceed a ſtep farther. Compare thy theory with the attributes of the Godhead? Is not thy God a God of truth and holineſs? Yet thou chargeſt Him with premeditated falſehood. Doſt thou expect His promiſes to be punctually fulfilled? Why? Becauſe He is faithful and righteous. And do not faithfulneſs and righteouſneſs equally require the punctual fulfilment of His threatenings? Do not promiſes and threatenings ſtand equally on the word of God? Is not the truth of God equally pledged in both? Is it not equally falſehood to depart from either? Be not deceived. *If we believe not, yet God abideth faithful: He cannot deny himſelf. The wicked ſhall be turned into hell; and all the people that forget God. The Son of Man ſhall ſend forth his angels; and they ſhall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and ſhall caſt them into a furnace of fire: there ſhall be wailing and gnaſhing of teeth. Theſe ſayings are faithful and true. Theſe are the true ſayings of God* (*f*). Conſider theſe things; leſt judgement and juſtice

(*f*) 2 Tim. ii. 13. Pſ. ix. 17. Matth. xiii. 41, 42. Rev. xix. 9. xxii. 6.

take

take hold on you, and there be none to deliver. Cloſe not your eyes againſt the warnings of the goſpel. Be convinced that God will bring upon the wicked all the puniſhment which He has denounced againſt them as ſurely as He will beſtow upon the righteous the glories, which Chriſt has purchaſed for them with His blood. Remember the ſons-in-law of Lot. Fly from the contagion of guilt: fly from ſin, the certain forerunner of deſtruction. Life is ſet before you. Why will ye die?

SERMON XVII.

On the Guilt of eſtabliſhing unſcriptural Principles of Conduct.

ISAIAH, v. 20.

Woe unto them that call Evil Good, and Good Evil; that put Darkneſs for Light, and Light for Darkneſs; that put Bitter for Sweet, and Sweet for Bitter!

THE ſteps by which error gains poſſeſſion of the human mind are various. Sometimes it puſhes its operations in ſecrecy and ſilence. Sometimes it advances with a bolder aſpect; and ſcarcely diſguiſes its aſſaults on the bulwarks of truth. At one period it reſorts to meaſures promiſing immediate ſucceſs. At another, it depends on the ſlow reſult of perſevering artifice. Now it aſpires not beyond a temporary triumph.

Now it extends its aim to permanent deluſion. Now it miſleads in a ſpecial inſtance by ſuggeſting unſound concluſions from juſt and recogniſed principles of conduct. Now it attains its purpoſe by exalting a falſe principle into the place and ſovereignty of the true. Of all the machinations of error the laſt, though among the moſt difficult to carry into effect, portends, when its victory is aſſured, the moſt durable and the moſt extenſive miſchief. The diſeaſe of a ſingle branch infects but the fruit of that branch. The rill drawn aſide from the main current is alone polluted by the impurities of the channel into which it is diverted. Is the whole produce to be corrupted? Canker the root. Is the whole ſtream to be tainted? Poiſon the fountain.

Such is the nature of the offence, againſt which in the paſſage of Scripture before us a woe is denounced by the prophet. In other parts of the chapter, ſpeaking, as here alſo, by the command and in the perſon of the Almighty, he proclaims vengeance from God againſt various deſcriptions of ſinners: againſt the covetous, *who join houſe to houſe and lay field to field:* againſt ſenſualiſts, *who follow ſtrong drink*, and cheer their feaſts with *the harp and the viol, but regard not the work of*

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the Lord: againſt the ſelf-righteous, who *are wiſe in their own eyes and prudent in their own ſight:* againſt ſcoffers, who deride the long-ſuffering of God, and call upon him to *make ſpeed and haſten his counſels:* againſt iniquitous judges, who for a bribe *juſtify the wicked, and take away the righteouſneſs of the righteous:* againſt thoſe who, profeſſing to be *His people*, through their own wilfulneſs *have no knowledge* of the real nature of religion, and are groaning under the appointed retribution of calamity: and, by parity of reaſoning, againſt all, who, like the ſinners ſelected as examples to illuſtrate the general denunciation, *have caſt away the law of the Lord of hoſts, and deſpiſed the word of the Holy One of Iſrael.* In this catalogue of crimes and conſequent woes the text has its ſtation. *Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil: that put darkneſs for light, and light for darkneſs: that put bitter for ſweet, and ſweet for bitter!* Woe unto them, who in any one of the ramifications of the two component branches of religion, piety and morality; in any ſubdiviſion of human duties, whether it has God or man for its immediate object; eſtabliſh a wicked principle in the place of the righteous oppoſite: either openly uphold the falſe rule of conduct, and openly vilify the true; or con-

fine themſelves to the tacit impeachment and ſubverſion of the latter by a ſtudied exaltation of the former.

I propoſe, under the divine bleſſing, to elucidate by ſome inſtances derived from modern life the guilt here ſtigmatiſed by the mouth of God; and the preſent and future woes here denounced by the ſame authority againſt every offender. The diſcuſſion lies at the root of all religion. Give me your diligent attention. And may the Spirit of God bleſs the good ſeed, which I may be made the inſtrument of ſowing in your hearts!

I. Among the moſt prominent illuſtrations of the preſent ſubject we may produce thoſe perſons, who repreſent enthuſiaſm as religion.

By enthuſiaſm, as applied with a reference to religion, I underſtand the ſubjection of the judgement, in points of religious faith or practice, to the influence of the imagination. The forms under which this influence manifeſts its predominance may be divers. The power which it exerciſes over one mind may in degree be greater or leſs than that which it poſſeſſes over another. But wherever, and in whatever ſhape and meaſure, it operates: there, and in that ſhape and meaſure, exiſts enthuſiaſm.

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In many inſtances enthuſiaſm ſuggeſts unauthoriſed ideas of perſonal communication between the individual and the Deity; of perſonal inſpiration ſenſibly vouchſafed by the Holy Ghoſt in mode or meaſure different from that divine influence on the heart and underſtanding, which is promiſed to every Chriſtian. Sometimes it deludes the mind with ideas equally unauthoriſed of the viſible agency of the Spirit of God on others. On ſome occaſions it pronounces with no leſs deciſion, and equally without the ſanction of the Scriptures, that the miraculous interpoſition of the finger of God is clearly diſcernible in a recent and perhaps cuſtomary event. And not ſeldom, it impels pious men to carry their views of a particular doctrine beyond the ſober tenor of the Scriptural declarations concerning that doctrine. In this inſtance, as the opinions of different perſons concerning the extent and importance of an individual doctrine may be various, enthuſiaſm is leſs eaſily aſcertained than when it appears under one of the preceding forms: and in conſequence, is frequently imputed by the careleſs, the ignorant, and the prejudiced, when it does not exiſt. It is ſufficient however for my preſent purpoſe, that under this ſhape alſo it is occaſionally manifeſted.

Woe

Woe unto the world, ſaid our Lord, *becauſe of offences. For it muſt needs be that offences come: but woe unto that man, by whom the offence cometh. It were better for him that a millſtone were hanged about his neck, and he caſt into the ſea, than that he ſhould offend one of theſe little ones* (*a*). Enthuſiaſm entails a woe on the perſon whom it infects. It darkens his underſtanding: it enſlaves him more and more to the dreams of a heated fancy: it teaches him to judge whether he is in a ſtate of ſalvation rather by internal impulſes and reveries than by a compariſon of his own diſpoſitions and conduct with the characteriſtic marks, by which the Scriptures diſcriminate the true Chriſtian; and thus contributes in various ways to enſnare him into errors dangerous to his ſoul, and to encreaſe the difficulties in the way of his return to *the form of ſound doctrine, the words of truth and ſoberneſs*. But its pernicious effects on others, the miſchiefs ſcattered far and wide by this *evil* when *called good*, are incalculable. Enthuſiaſm diſparages genuine piety, and cauſes it to be deſpiſed as lukewarm formality. It degrades many doctrines for the immoderate exaltation of one. It diſguſts the ſober and diſcourages the timid Chriſtian. It expoſes

(*a*) Matth. xviii. 7. Luke, xvii. 2.

Chriſti-

chriſtianity to the ſcoffs and taunts of its enemies; and furniſhes a ſpecious plea to the *children of this world*, who labour to repreſent earneſtneſs in religion as hypocriſy, folly, or fanaticiſm.

It is ſaid, and truly ſaid, that ſincere piety is often an inmate in the breaſt which is the habitation of enthuſiaſm. It is to be deplored that ſincere piety ſhould ever be linked with an aſſociate, by the continued operation of whoſe deluding influence it has frequently been at laſt extirpated from the boſom. Let ſincere piety however be honoured, wherever it may be found. But let not the chaff be valued becauſe of its conjunction with the wheat. Let not the baſe alloy be counted as a portion of the precious metal. It is alſo ſtated, and occaſionally in the ſhape of an apology, that enthuſiaſm originates from ignorance, unaccompanied by evil deſign. The general ſtatement may be grounded in truth. But let every man who urges it in the firſt place weigh the language of St. Paul, when that apoſtle deſcribes himſelf as *the chief of ſinners:* and obſerve, ſecondly, that he attributes his ſin to *ignorance* (*b*). I draw no parallel, no compariſon, between enthuſiaſm and perſecution.

(*b*) 1 Tim. i. 12—16.

But I would fervently exhort you to deduce from the expreſſions of St. Paul the legitimate and univerſally applicable concluſion: that ignorance, when you are ſurrounded with means and opportunities of knowledge, is wilful; that wilful ignorance is a ſin; and that there is no offence for which wilful ignorance can be pleaded in juſtification.

II. Let us now turn our eyes to the oppoſite quarter: to men who denominate religion enthuſiaſm.

Enthuſiaſm is on principle buſy and loquacious. Lukewarmneſs, though capable of being rouſed to a turbulent defence of forms and of its own conduct, is by nature ſilent and ſupine. Hence enthuſiaſm, in proportion to the relative number of its adherents, raiſes a much louder ſtir, and attracts far more ſpeedy and extenſive notice, than lukewarmneſs. But let the torpid conviction of the lukewarm be contraſted with the illuſion of the enthuſiaſt: and the former will prove itſelf not leſs dangerous, and generally, I fear, more deliberately criminal, than the latter.

The lukewarm Chriſtian, if according to popular language he is to be called by the name of Chriſtian, reduces religion to a ceremonial ſervice, devoid of warmth, animation, and

and ſpirituality. Punctilious perhaps in *the form of godlineſs*, he *denies the power thereof. His lips draw nigh unto God: his heart is far from him* (*c*). Outward obſervances he ſubſtitutes for ardent piety; and moral decorum for *the fruits of the ſpirit. To ſeek firſt the kingdom of God and his righteouſneſs; to crucify the fleſh with its affections and luſts; to live not unto ourſelves, but unto Chriſt who died for us;* theſe are precepts which in the hands of the lukewarm religioniſt evaporate into prohibitions of the groſſer vices: and ſcarcely ſeem inconſiſtent with the toleration of ſome one of the groſſer vices on condition of a decent abſtinence from the reſt. That we are juſtified by faith alone, implies in his creed no more than that, in order to ſupply the deficiency of his own righteouſneſs as the price of ſalvation, ſome acceſſion muſt be borrowed from the righteouſneſs of Chriſt. To *be transformed by the renewing of our minds*, to be *created anew in Chriſt Jeſus*, to be *born again of the Spirit*; theſe are phraſes which in his eſtimation import that his heart, by nature ſubſtantially good, is yet to receive ſome improvement from divine grace: that, although the original foundation be in the main ſufficiently ſolid, ſome alterations are needful in the ſuperſtructure: that the apartments, neceſ-

(*c*) 2 Tim. iii. 5. Matth. xv. 8.

ſarily contracting from daily uſe a little duſt and defilement, require occaſional purification. All religious warmth, all active zeal for the glory of God, he decries as enthuſiaſm; and vindicates his coldneſs by declaiming againſt fanatics. Every degree of exertion for the ſalvation of men which ſurpaſſes the ſcantineſs of his own ſtandard, he eyes with ſuſpicion, as the ſymptom of a heated brain; and eagerly ſeizes every pretence for cenſuring the ſtrenuous and faithful Chriſtian, in whoſe affectionate diligence he reads a reproach of his own inactivity and deadneſs. In lukewarmneſs every thing tends to deterioration. The heart grows inert, the conſcience dull of feeling. Penitence becomes ſhallow, prayer languid, religious meditation unintereſting, faith feeble and indiſtinct and unproductive. Sin loſes its heinouſneſs. Every thing is ſtagnant, and verges towards corruption. The vivifying principle ſeems extinguiſhed.

Againſt ſuch a frame of mind do you wonder that a woe is denounced? Are you aſtoniſhed that Jeſus Chriſt ſpeaks of the *lukewarm* with abhorrence: declares his wiſh that they were either *cold or hot*; and while they boaſtfully proclaim themſelves *rich and increaſed with goods and having need of nothing*, affirms *them to be naked, and miſerable, and*

and poor, and blind, and naked; counſels them to *buy of him gold tried in the fire that they may be rich, and white raiment that they may be clothed;* and forewarns them that, unleſs they *repent* and become *zealous*, they ſhall be utterly caſt out for ever? *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit ſaith to the lukewarm* in *the churches* (*d*)! Againſt you, if you are lukewarm, has the Spirit denounced this woe by the mouth of St. John. Againſt you, if you are a patron of lukewarmneſs in others, if you vilify religion and diſcourage the true ſervants of the Lord Jeſus by aſcribing to fervent and active piety, to ſound and enlightened faith, the denomination of enthuſiaſm; if you thus call *evil good and good evil*, thus *put darkneſs for light and light for darkneſs;* againſt you has the Spirit denounced an additional woe by the lips of Iſaiah. Look up to the impending judgement. *Be zealous, and repent!*

III. Another illuſtration of the text is furniſhed by perſons, who repreſent a partial conformity to the commandments of God as meriting the appellation of religion: and thus alſo by implication ſtigmatiſe the true Chriſtian as *righteous over-much.*

(*d*) Rev. iii. 15—19. 22.

It is not on the dedication of the heart to God that men of this deſcription reſt their confidence. In their religion the devotion of the heart, and the conſequent ſurrender of the affections to holineſs, have no ſhare. It is on the practical obſervance of one or more of the moral virtues, and on a practical abſtinence from ſome particular ſins, that they ground their pretenſions to the kingdom of heaven. "We do not profeſs to be eminent "ſaints: nor will we aver that we have been "as religious as we ought to have been. But "neither are we groſs offenders. We defy "the tongue of calumny to fix on us any "ſcandalous vice. Or if we have been be-"trayed into groſs tranſgreſſion, it has been "accidentally and by ſurpriſe. We are ſorry "for the inſtance: and we doubt not that "God, who knows that man is frail, will "make reaſonable allowances. Nay, though "we may have fallen into an evil habit; we "truſt that in the eyes of our equitable judge "it will have been compenſated by the exer-"ciſe of many virtues. We are unwilling "to commend ourſelves. But the ſuperci-"lioufneſs of rigid moraliſers requires us to "do juſtice to our characters. Our integrity "has been through life unimpeachable. We "have injured no man. We forgive every

" man who has injured us; and are at peace " with all the world." Such is the language which the fullneſs of the ſelf-ſufficient cauſes to echo throughout the dwellings of health and proſperity. Such are the ſentiments, expreſſed perhaps in a moderated tone, which the miniſter of the goſpel too frequently hears when ſitting by the ſide of the bed of death. Is this religion? Is this to live unto Chriſt? Is this to ſerve God through a Redeemer, by ſanctification of the Spirit, with gratitude and love and holy fear? Is he religious, who deliberately perſeveres in the habitual gratification of any unhallowed temper or deſire? " Not ſo religious," you reply, " as he ought " to be." Not ſo religious as he ought to be! In the ſight of his Judge he has no true religion. As ſurely as the Scriptures proclaim the deciſions of eternal wiſdom, he is without the firſt elements of religion: he is without that which conſtitutes the baſis of religion, the unqualified ſurrender of the heart to God. As ſurely as the Scriptures reveal the decrees of Omnipotence; the portion reſerved for him is everlaſting woe (*e*). Is he religious who reſts on the obſervance of the rules of integrity, or of temperance, or of liberality,

(*e*) 1 Cor. vi, 9, 10. Gal. v. 19—21. James, ii. 10, 11.

or of ſome other favourite preceptreſs ſelected from the band of moral virtues: an obſervance too which proves itſelf by ſtanding thus inſulated to have originated rather from worldly motives, than from that genuine ſolicitude to pleaſe God, which draws around it the whole aſſemblage of Chriſtian graces? Is he religious, who, proudly ſuſtaining himſelf on the ſtaff of ſome imaginary merit, bows himſelf not down at the foot of the croſs diſplayed before him; feels not his knees tremble under him; feels not the radical corruption of his heart; the enormity of every offence againſt his Heavenly Benefactor and King; "the ineſtimable love of God in the "redemption of the world by our Lord Jeſus "Chriſt;" the riches of the mercy which exchanges his helpleſs depravity, his proſpects of eternal death, "for the means of grace, "and the hope of glory?" *Woe be unto them who* thus *call evil good:* who put a withered branch for a living tree: who truſt to that which they have done, and look not to which they have left undone: who regard that which they have done as though it were perfect, and wrought by ſtrength of their own; and wilfully perceive not that every good work is the fruit of the Spirit of God,

and

and that the beſt of human works are unholy in the eyes of Jehovah, and are rendered pure and acceptable before Him only through the imputed righteouſneſs of Chriſt.

IV. We may in the next place produce as illuſtrative of the general propoſition before us thoſe who repreſent the palliation of ſin as charity; and brand with the character of cenſoriouſneſs all opinions and deſcriptions of guilt conformable to the Scriptures.

The higher ranks of life may be thoſe, in which this offence appears the moſt glaring: but it pervades, and perhaps equally overſpreads, every claſs in ſociety. From the mouth of theſe apologiſers no ſin receives its appropriate denomination. Some lighter phraſe is ever on the lips to obſcure or to cloke its enormity, perhaps to transform it into a virtue. Is profaneneſs noticed? It is an idle habit by which nothing is intended. Is extravagance named? It is a generous diſregard of money. Is luxury mentioned? It is a hoſpitable deſire to ſee our friends happy. What is worldly-mindedneſs? It is prudence. What is pride? It is proper ſpirit, a due attention to our own dignity. What is ambition? A laudable deſire of diſtinction and pre-eminence; a juſt ſenſe of our own

excellence and deſert. What is devotedneſs to faſhion? It is a due regard to the cuſtoms of the polite world. What is over-reaching? It is underſtanding our buſineſs. What is ſervility? It is ſkill in making our way to advancement. What are intemperance and ſins of impurity? They are indecorums, irregularities, human frailties, cuſtomary indiſcretions, the natural and venial conſequences of cheerfulneſs, company, and temptation; the unguarded ebullitions of youth, which in a little time will ſatiate and cure themſelves. Now all this is *candour*: all this is *charity*. If a reference be made to religion, theſe men immediately enlarge on the *mercy* of God. If conſtrained to ſpeak of His threatenings, they advert to them diſtantly, briefly, with affected tenderneſs, as to a ſort of law in dead letter held forth to terrify guilt and to confine it within reaſonable bounds; but a law which they intimate that the juſtice of the Deity will never permit him to enforce. To paint ſin in its genuine colours: to denounce the wrath of God againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men: to proclaim from the word of inſpiration that obſtinate perſeverance againſt light and knowledge in any one unholy diſpoſition or practice will exclude from the kingdom of Heaven:

to

to unfold the terrors of hell, of everlaſting damnation, of the lake of inextinguiſhable fire, of the abodes of thoſe whoſe ſmoke aſcendeth for ever and ever: this is phariſaical punctiliouſneſs, intolerable rigour, illiberal ſuperſtition, the frenzy of bigotry, the bitterneſs of miſanthropy. The ſons of *candour* and *charity* turn away with contempt. Nay, they profeſs to be rouſed with honeſt indignation againſt perſons who thus miſrepreſent the counſels of a God, who would have all men to be ſaved: and ſtand forth in defence of his attributes injured and degraded by mercileſs preachers, who aſſume to themſelves the character of His ambaſſadors, while they bar the gates of Heaven againſt the workmanſhip of His hands.

If thoſe who thus abuſe the name of Chriſtian charity; who thus ſtrip ſin of its heinouſneſs, and the Scriptures of their ſanctions; belong not to the claſs of deceivers, who *put darkneſs for light and light for darkneſs, bitter for ſweet and ſweet for bitter:* to whom ſhall the deſcription of the prophet be applied? If the preſumptuous ignorance, the ſecret love of ſin, the obtruſive and peſtilent example, diſplayed by theſemen, eſcape the penal denunciation: where ſhall the woe find its objects?

V. There

V. There yet remains to be ſpecified an exemplification of the guilt menaced with vengeance by the prophet: a perverſion of principle which, while the lower ranks are happily too little refined to be infected with it, taints with a greater or a leſs degree of its deceitful influence the bulk of the middle and higher claſſes of the community.

Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth ſpeaketh (*f*).

What is the principle of conduct to which in the tranſactions of poliſhed life the appeal is uſually made? Attend a court of juſtice. Is an arbitrator recommended? It is becauſe he is a man of *honour*. Is a plaintiff or a defendant noticed with complacency? It is becauſe his proceedings have been *honourable*. Go to the ſenate. By what criterion are applauſe and cenſure apportioned there? By the rule of *honour*. Viſit the circle of private ſociety. The character of an individual is the theme of diſcuſſion. Animated eyes and eager voices ſpeak his praiſe. Why? Becauſe he is *a man of perfect honour*. Another perſon is named. Diſapprobation contracts every brow, and ſharpens every tongue. For what reaſon? "In ſuch a tranſaction the

(*f*) Luke, vi. 45.

"beha-

" behaviour of that man was *diſhonourable:* " yes, in another *his honour was impeached.*" Of the preceding picture I mean not indiſcriminately to affirm that there are not exceptions to the likeneſs. But let any perſon, who has aſſigned even a ſlight meaſure of attention to the ſubject, pronounce whether, in each of the caſes deſcribed, the repreſentation be not accurately conformable to the general features of the original. Has the pulpit eſcaped the contagion? Comparatively it has preſerved itſelf pure. Would to Heaven that in ſome of its compoſitions the public eye had not diſcerned traces and mixtures, which preclude me from aſcribing to it unſullied purity! *The lips of the prieſt ſhould keep knowledge; and they ſhould ſeek the law at his mouth: for he is the meſſenger of the Lord of Hoſts* (*g*). Never may the paſtor feed his flock with an intermixture of poiſonous herbage! Never may he lead them to drink of ſtreams, which flow from an unhallowed fountain!

Whence is this jargon? Has it founded its dominion on the application by St. Paul of the term *honourable* to marriage (*h*); on the teſtimony of approbation borne by the ſame apoſtle to *things of good report* (*i*); and on

(*g*) Malachi, ii. 7. (*h*) Heb. xiii. 4.
(*i*) Phillipp. iv. 8.

thoſe

thoſe paſſages of the Scriptures in which holineſs is deſcribed as entitled to reſpect and praiſe? Very different are the foundations of its ſway. It reigns, becauſe multitudes *love the praiſe of men more than the praiſe of God.* It reigns, becauſe *they receive honour one of another; and ſeek not that honour which cometh from God only* (*k*).

What is this idol, which men worſhip in the place of the living God? What is this principle, which they enthrone in degradation of his ſovereign word? Honour implies the favourable eſtimation entertained of an individual by others of his own line and place in ſociety. The votary of honour may delude himſelf with the idea that, whatever be the ordinary expreſſions of his lips, his heart is dedicated to religion. But his heart is fixed on his idol, human applauſe. In the place of the love and the fear of God he ſubſtitutes the love of praiſe and the fear of ſhame. In the place of conſcience he ſubſtitutes pride. For the dread of guilt he ſubſtitutes the apprehenſion of diſgrace.

My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, ſaith the Lord. That which is highly eſteemed among men is abomination in the ſight of God (*l*). Woe unto you,

(*k*) John, v. 44. xii. 43. (*l*) Iſaiah, lv. 8. Luke, xvi. 15.

who

who thus *put darkneſs for light*, and proportionally thruſt aſide into darkneſs the light of the world, the oracles of the Moſt High. *Ye are they*, like the Phariſees of old, *who juſtify yourſelves before men. Ye* are they, who *teach for doctrines the commandments of men.* Ye are they, who *make the commandments of God of none effect by your traditions* (*m*). Ye are they who uphold the duelliſt. Ye are they who take the ſword out of the hands of the law; and commit to every man the vindication of his real or imaginary wrongs. Ye are they who prefer the diſcharge of a gaming debt to the payment of the juſt demand of the famiſhed tradeſman. Ye are they who eſtabliſh a principle of morality, baſeleſs becauſe not founded upon religion; ſcanty in its comprehenſion, becauſe tolerant of many crimes and indifferent to numerous virtues; and however highly eſteemed among men, *abominable* in the ſight of God, becauſe exalted in neglect or in contempt of his word, regardleſs of his ſervice and his glory.

My brethren! The profeſſed object of this diſcourſe is now fulfilled. You have diſtinctly ſurveyed a ſufficient variety of examples ſelected to diſplay the ſin, which in the paſſage

(*m*) Luke, xvi. 15. Matth. xv. 6. 9.

of

of Scripture before us the prophet had in contemplation. And your conſciences atteſt the juſtice of the woe denounced againſt every inſtance of that ſin by the Spirit of God. What is the warning voice which, while we ponder on theſe examples ſingly or collectively, reſounds in our ears? *To the law and to the teſtimony. If they ſpeak not according to this word, it is becauſe there is no light in them. Thus ſaith the Lord: ſtand ye in the ways, and ſee, and aſk for the old paths where is the good way, and walk therein; and ye ſhall find reſt for your ſouls* (*n*). Let not the fumes of a heated imagination bewilder you into enthuſiaſm. Let not the natural averſion of the heart from religion chill you into lukewarmneſs. Conceive not that it is religion to obey ſome of the commandments of God, and knowingly to perſevere in diſobeying one. Conceive not that it is charity to explain away the heinouſneſs of ſin; or cenſorioufneſs to pronounce that to be guilt which God has pronounced to be guilt, that to be the ſubject of puniſhment which God has averred that He will puniſh. Let not *your minds be corrupted from the ſimplicity which is in Chriſt* into a habit of referring to that unauthoriſed and miſerable arbiter of

(*n*) Iſaiah, viii. 20. Jerm. vi. 16.

morals,

morals, that ideal power before which the world bows down in ſenſeleſs adoration, the principle of honour. *My ſon! Give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God. Woe unto you,* if in any of the inſtances which have been ſpecified, or in any analogous example, you are deluded to *call evil good and good evil, to put darkneſs for light and light for darkneſs, to put bitter for ſweet and ſweet for bitter!* Woe unto you if you wilfully become the inſtrument of ſeducing others into ſimilar deluſions! Stand faſt on the ſure rock, the ſacred Word. Let ignorance miſunderſtand the goſpel: let indifference ſtrip it of its energy: let pride, let ſenſuality, let worldly mindedneſs frame to themſelves ſchemes of religion conformable to the corrupt principle in accommodation to which they are ſeverally framed. Let the language of ignorance, of indifference, of pride, of ſenſuality, of worldly mindedneſs, on topics of piety and morality, be unrighteouſneſs, be folly, be madneſs. In God, in His counſels, in His recorded law, there is *neither variableneſs nor ſhadow of turning. Jeſus Chriſt*, the Judge of all, is *the ſame yeſterday, and to-day, and for ever.* Meaſure thou all things by that ſtandard, by which thou ſhalt thyſelf be meaſured. Weigh all things

in thoſe ſcales, by which thou ſhalt thyſelf be tried. Make thy reference in all things to that tribunal, from which there ſhall be no appeal. Judge all things by the word of God: for by that word ſhalt thou and all things be judged.

May 1807

SERMON XVIII.

An Expoſition of the firſt Part of the Leſſon appointed for the Burial Service.

I COR. XV. 20.

Now is Chriſt riſen from the Dead, and become the firſt Fruits of them that ſlept.

ALL Scripture is given by inſpiration of God: and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for inſtruction in righteouſneſs: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furniſhed into all good works (a). Such is the divine authority, ſuch is the comprehenſive nature, ſuch are the manifold and ſupremely important uſes, of the Bible. Hence it becomes the duty and the wiſdom of the miniſters of the goſpel, in their en-

(a) 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

deavours to train up the flocks committed to their charge in the knowledge and obedience of the faith of Chriſt, from time to time to vary the methods, in which they deduce inſtruction from the word of God: to vary them however within ſuch limits only as the Scriptures themſelves completely authoriſe; and to vary them, if in ſome meaſure for the purpoſe of exciting a more lively attention among their hearers, yet principally for the ſake of ſucceſſively impreſſing on their congregations the different helps and encouragements to holineſs, and the different diſſuaſives from ſin, which the ſacred writings ſupply. Thus at one time the preacher will dwell chiefly, though by no means without a decided reference to practice, on doctrines. At another time, regarding the truth and import of the doctrines as eſtabliſhed, he will enter into a fuller detail concerning the conduct, which a firm belief in them is deſigned and adapted to produce. Sometimes he will unfold the nature and evince the efficacy of faith. Sometimes he will enlarge on holy tempers and good works, thoſe *fruits of the Spirit* by which genuine faith is manifeſted and adorned. Sometimes he will build his admonitions on the preceptive parts of the Old or of the New Teſtament. Sometimes

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he will derive them from the memorable hiſtories which thoſe records contain of righteous men protected, delivered, and rewarded by that God whom they ſerved and glorified; or of rebellious deſpiſers of the divine law condemned to ſhame, anguiſh, and deſtruction. Sometimes he will fix his thoughts on a ſingle verſe; and will explain with minuteneſs of inveſtigation, and enforce with copiouſneſs of reaſoning the religious truth which it involves. Sometimes he will ſelect a paſſage of greater length; point out the bearing and connexion of the arguments employed by the inſpired prophet, evangeliſt, or apoſtle; and apply them, ſo far as they may be lawfully applied, to the edification, the ſupport, and the comfort of Chriſtians of the preſent day.

The laſt of theſe various methods of obtaining inſtruction from the word of God is that which I propoſe now to purſue. In the preſent and in a ſubſequent diſcourſe, (for the ſubject is too extenſive to be compreſſed with advantage into the compaſs of a ſingle ſermon), it will be my object to direct your minds to that portion of St. Paul's firſt Epiſtle to the Corinthians, which opens with the verſe ſelected for the text and extends to the concluſion of the chapter. It is a portion of Scripture in the higheſt degree

intereſting on account of the momentous truths which it diſcloſes. And it is rendered peculiarly impreſſive by the ſolemn and affecting nature of the occaſions on which it is publicly employed. It is a portion of Scripture which we have frequently heard pronounced over the lifeleſs bodies of our friends. It is one which others within no diſtant period ſhall hear pronounced over our own. The Church to which we belong has wiſely and piouſly endeavoured to render the interment of the dead a ſource of edification to the living. When pride is humbled and the heart ſoftened by affliction; when the coffin ſlowly borne to the houſe of God, pauſing there awhile on its way towards the grave, or placed within its narrow manſion and receiving the laſt looks of ſurviving ſorrow, proclaims with a voice which cannot be miſunderſtood, the ſpeedy and inevitable end of all earthly poſſeſſions and enjoyments: the mourner is taught to look to Chriſt the Redeemer, the Reſurrection and the Life, in whom whoſoever believeth, though he were dead, yet ſhall he live. He is taught that, if the Lord has taken away; He has taken only what He gave. He is taught that, though man walketh in a vain ſhadow; yet his hope is truly in the Lord. He is taught that, if

God turneth man to deſtruction; again He ſaith, "Come again, ye children of men." He is taught ſo to number his days, that he may apply his heart unto wiſdom. He is taught that a voice from Heaven hath proclaimed, "*Bleſſed are the dead, which die in* "*the Lord: even ſo, ſaith the Spirit; for they* "*reſt from their labours.*" He is taught not to be ſorry as men without hope, for them who ſleep in Chriſt. He is taught that the ſouls of the faithful, after they are delivered from the burden of the fleſh, are with Chriſt in joy and felicity. He is taught that though earth be committed to earth, aſhes to aſhes, duſt to duſt: it is in ſure and certain hope of the reſurrection of the juſt to eternal life, through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who ſhall change our vile body that it may be like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able to ſubdue all things to Himſelf; and ſhall then pronounce that benediction to all that love and fear God, *Come, ye bleſſed children of my Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world.* In the paſſage from the firſt Epiſtle to the Corinthians appointed to form a part of the funeral ſervice, this fundamental doctrine of our faith, this glorious and ineſtimable hope, this unfailing ſupport to the

righteous under all the labours and afflictions of mortality, is eſtabliſhed by irreſiſtible arguments; guarded againſt cavils and miſconceptions; diſplayed under the moſt animating repreſentations; and practically applied to purpoſes the moſt noble.

Let us proceed, in reliance on the bleſſing of Him under the guidance of whoſe Spirit all Scripture has been recorded, to the full conſideration of this portion of holy writ.

In the earlier part of the chapter the apoſtle diſcloſes the circumſtance, which had convinced him of the neceſſity of the leſſon which he was about to inculcate. *If Chriſt*, ſaith he, *be preached that he roſe from the dead: how ſay ſome among you that there is no reſurrection of the dead?* Though the Old Teſtament contains, eſpecially in the writings of the prophets, many forcible intimations of a future exiſtence: the Sadducees, a powerful and numerous ſect among the Jews, denied that there remained a life beyond the grave. Among the heathens, all was obſcurity and doubt, or darkneſs and unbelief. *When they heard of the reſurrection of the dead*, ſome liſtened with prejudice, contempt, and reluctance: others openly ſcoffed and *mocked* at the novelty and ſtrangeneſs of the doctrine.

Hence

Hence among the early Chriſtians, whether of Jewiſh or of Gentile race, there was found a favourable opening for falſe teachers, who were adventurous enough to undermine and oppoſe the hope of a future life. Two heretical declaimers of this deſcription, Hymeneus and Philetus, are ſpecified by St. Paul in his ſecond Epiſtle to Timothy as having *erred concerning the truth, ſaying that the reſurrection is paſt already:* affirming the promiſed reſurrection to be of a figurative nature; a reſurrection to be accompliſhed in the preſent world; a reſurrection, as they probably explained themſelves, from a ſtate of vice to a ſtate of virtue. Though Hymeneus, according to the poſitive declaration of the ſame apoſtle, had, in this fundamental point *made ſhipwreck concerning faith*, becauſe he had firſt *put away a good conſcience:* though both theſe corrupters of *the truth as it is in Jeſus*, having emancipated themſelves from the dread of a judgement to come, would naturally plunge with little reſtraint into flagitiouſneſs, and might thus have been expected to bring general diſcredit on their opinions even in the eyes of common obſervers; yet *their word* did *eat as doth a canker, and overthrew the faith of ſome.* Teachers infected with the ſame ſenſeleſs and pernicious principles

ciples had inſinuated themſelves and acquired influence among the Chriſtians of Corinth. Well aware that the admiſſion of ſuch principles in any degree tended in an equal degree to uproot Chriſtianity from its foundations, the apoſtle ſtrenuouſly advances forward to contend for the genuine faith, *the faith* originally *delivered to the ſaints*. He recalls to the remembrance of his converts that goſpel which he had preached to them at the beginning; that goſpel which they had embraced; that goſpel by which they were to be ſaved: a goſpel, built on the ground-work of Chriſt's reſurrection from the dead; and eſtabliſhing by infallible proofs his repeated appearances after his return from the grave, ſeparately to St. Peter, afterwards to St. James, more than once to all the apoſtles collected together, then to an aſſembly of above five hundred diſciples, moſt of whom were ſtill alive, and, laſt of all, to St. Paul himſelf. He warns them that the reality of the reſurrection of Chriſt was inſeparably connected with the aſſurance of their own future reſurrection: that if the dead were not to riſe, Chriſt was not riſen; that if Chriſt were not riſen, the apoſtles who had promulgated a goſpel proclaiming His reſurrection had teſtified falſely concerning God;

God; that their preaching had in that caſe been in vain, an impoſture and a deluſion; that the Corinthians had believed in vain, and were yet in their ſins, had placed reliance on a falſehood, and were deſtitute of pardon and without a poſſibility of ſalvation; and that all who had fallen aſleep in Chriſt, all who for His ſake had encountered perſecution and miſery, all who had died in His faith and in full aſſurance of life eternal through Him, had periſhed. Having thus fully ſet before them the conſequences which would neceſſarily enſue, if the peſtilent doctrine with which they were aſſailed were founded in truth: a doctrine which would prove that Chriſt had not riſen from the dead; that He had wrought no atonement for ſin; that He was unable to perform his promiſes; that no hope remained for the righteous; that the whole fabric of the Chriſtian religion was a human contrivance, the production of deliberate fraud and unexampled hypocriſy: he cheers them in the words of the text with a ſolemn ſtatement of the real fact as to the reſurrection of their Lord, and the bleſſed reſult of His reſurrection with regard to all thoſe who truſted in Him. *But now is Chriſt riſen from the dead and become the firſt fruits of them that ſlept.* "Be not ſhaken in mind,"

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for thus we may conceive the apoſtle addreſſing his beloved followers; "Be not ſhaken "in mind, nor carried about with every wind "of doctrine. Hold faſt without wavering "the profeſſion of your faith, and eſpecially "of that moſt important article, on which "the truth of the goſpel and every promiſe "which you cheriſh of pardon and future "happineſs depend, the reſurrection of your "Saviour from the dead. Regard not theſe "unrighteous deceivers, who are come among "you, ſubverting your ſouls, miniſters of "the prince of darkneſs transforming themſelves into apoſtles of Chriſt; the chief "of whom, Hymeneus, I am conſtrained "to deliver unto Satan, I am compelled to "ſubject to the penal infliction of a miraculous and ſevere diſeaſe, that he may "learn not to blaſpheme; and that, being "thus driven by the puniſhment of the fleſh to "a conviction of his guilt, his ſoul may perchance be ſaved in the day of the Lord (*b*). "*Chriſt is riſen from the dead.* He roſe on "the third day, according to the Scriptures. "God did not leave his ſoul in hell, in the "abode of ſeparate ſpirits; neither did He "ſuffer His Holy One to ſee corruption. And "He *is become the firſt fruits of them that ſlept.*

(*b*) 1 Cor. v. 5. 1 Tim. i. 20.

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"He is the firſt-born from the dead, that in "all things He might have the pre-eminence. "For it pleaſed the Father that in Him "ſhould all fulneſs dwell. As by the obla- "tion of the firſt fruits, the divine bleſſing "was drawn down upon the whole harveſt: "ſo has Chriſt ſanctified all the people of "God, for whoſe ſins He died, for whoſe "juſtification He aroſe. If you believe that "Jeſus died and roſe again; believe that them "alſo which ſleep in Jeſus will God bring "with Him."

By eſtabliſhing the fact of the reſurrection of Chriſt, the apoſtle had provided a concluſive anſwer to every objection which could be urged againſt the future reſurrection of the dead, on whatever principle the objection might be founded. Was the reſurrection of the dead pronounced impoſſible? The reply was at hand. "*Chriſt is riſen.* The ſame "power which raiſed Him is able to raiſe "all men." Was the reſurrection deſcribed, in the language of profane deſpiſers among the heathen, as an unworthy and undeſirable hope? The reply was ready. "*Chriſt is* "*riſen.* Can that hope be unworthy; can "that hope be undeſirable to men; which, "when the Son of God became man, was "perfected in Him?" Was the reſurrection

repreſented as an uncertain event? The Chriſtian was prepared to anſwer, "*Chriſt is* "*riſen; and is become the firſt fruits of them that* "*ſlept.* He, who hath proved Himſelf to "be the Son of God by riſing from the dead, "hath declared that all who are in the grave "ſhall hear his voice and ſhall come forth." So deeply however was St. Paul impreſſed with the importance of the ſubject, that he labours with extreme earneſtneſs in the remainder of the chapter to confirm and illuſtrate the truth of the doctrine that all men ſhall be raiſed from the dead; and to explain the bleſſedneſs of the change, which ſhall then be experienced by the righteous.

For ſince by man came death; by man came alſo the reſurrection of the dead: For as in Adam all die; even ſo in Chriſt ſhall all be made alive.

Death came by man: in Adam all die. Adam, tranſgreſſing the divine command, by obedience to which he was to hold his happy ſtate, was expelled from Paradiſe, leſt by continuing to eat of the tree of life he ſhould live for ever. Barred by the flaming ſword of the cherubim from all acceſs to its vivifying fruit, he was abandoned to his natural mortality. His mortal nature deſcended to his children: from them it has deſcended to us: from us it ſhall deſcend to the lateſt generation

neration of mankind. So death paſſed upon all men. By Adam's tranſgreſſion every man has been ſubjected to the ſentence, *Duſt thou art, and unto duſt ſhalt thou return.* But God is a God of mercy. Where ſin abounded, he decreed that grace ſhould much more abound. He decreed that the ruin brought on the human race by the prince of evil ſpirits who animated the ſerpent, by Satan, the *father of lies*, who was thus *a murderer from the beginning*, ſhould not be without hope and without end. He decreed that by a being of that very nature which the Devil had degraded and ſubdued; by a deſcendent, according to the fleſh, from thoſe miſerable ſinners, whom he now triumphantly led captive at his will; the loſs of man ſhould be regained, the great Enemy ſhould in his turn be vanquiſhed and hurled into perdition. He decreed, that the *ſeed of the woman* ſhould *bruiſe the ſerpent's head.* He decreed that, as by man came death, by man ſhould alſo come the reſurrection of the dead: that *as in Adam all die, even ſo in Chriſt ſhall all be made alive.* Chriſt undertook the office of mercy and reconciliation. He undertook, though without ſin, to be made in the likeneſs of ſinful fleſh; to lay down his life on the croſs, there to accompliſh by his meritorious ſufferings

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an atonement ſufficient for the ſins of the whole world; there openly to triumph over the principalities and powers of darkneſs; there to deſtroy the empire of Satan, and to ſet free the priſoners of the tomb. *I will ranſom them*, he cried, *from the power of the grave: I will redeem them from death. O death! I will be thy plague. O grave! I will be thy deſtruction* (*c*). Was the dominion acquired through Adam by death univerſal? So alſo is the redemption from death purchaſed by Jeſus Chriſt. *There ſhall be a reſurrection of the dead, both of the juſt and unjuſt. The dead, ſmall and great*, ſhall *ſtand before God. All that are in the graves ſhall hear the voice of the Son of God, and ſhall come forth: they that have done good, unto the reſurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the reſurrection of damnation* (*d*).

But every man in his own order. Chriſt, the firſt fruits: afterwards, they that are Chriſt's, at his coming.

The apoſtle, having evinced, in the preceding verſes, the univerſality of the reſurrection both of the righteous and of the wicked, is ſolicitous to win the hearts no leſs than the underſtandings of the Corinthians to a wil-

(*c*) Hoſ. xiii. 14. (*d*) Acts, xxiv. 15. Rev. xx. 12. John, v. 25. 28, 29.

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ling acceptation of the doctrine of a future life. Hence, throughout the ſubſequent part of the chapter he directs their attention almoſt excluſively to circumſtances, which pertain to the reſurrection of the juſt. Chriſt had already fulfilled the prophecies, which had declared that He ſhould be the firſt who ſhould riſe from the dead. He had aſcended into Heaven, and had entered into His glory. He had already preſented himſelf before the throne of God as the interceſſor, the forerunner, and the repreſentative, of his ſaints. In their due time, and in their appointed order, he will receive them from the eaſt and from the weſt, from the north and from the ſouth, into the kingdom prepared for them, through his covenanted atonement, from the foundation of the world. When the Lord himſelf ſhall deſcend from Heaven with a ſhout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; the dead in Chriſt ſhall riſe firſt. And then ſhall the righteous who remain alive at that aweful hour be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air: and ſo ſhall they all be for ever with the Lord (*e*).

Then cometh the end, when He ſhall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Fa-

(*e*) 1 Theſſ. iv. 15—17.

ther: when He ſhall have put down all rule, and all authority and power. For He muſt reign, till He hath put all enemies under his feet. The laſt enemy that ſhall be deſtroyed is death: for He hath put all things under his feet. But when He ſaith, all things are put under Him; it is manifeſt that He is excepted, which did put all things under Him. And when all things ſhall be ſubdued unto Him; then ſhall the Son alſo himſelf be ſubject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.

Becauſe He, who was the Son of God, vouchſafed to become the Son of man; becauſe He who thought it not robbery to equal with God, He who in the beginning was with God and was God, took upon Himſelf the form of a ſervant, and humbled Himſelf, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the croſs: therefore God hath highly exalted Him. As a partaker of the everlaſting Godhead, our Saviour could not be exalted. But in His aſſumed nature as man, in His character as Mediator, He was capable of being exalted and glorified. *Thy throne, O God, ſaith the Father unto the Son, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a ſceptre of righteouſneſs is the ſceptre of thy kingdom. Thou haſt loved righteouſneſs, and hated iniquity: therefore God, even thy God,*

hath anointed thee with the oil of gladneſs above thy fellows (*f*). "O Thou who art a partaker of the ſovereign and eternal Godhead; Thou who, when Thou ſhalt become incarnate in human nature, ſhalt completely fulfil my righteous law by the Spirit which ſhall be poured upon Thee without meaſure: as Man ſhalt Thou be raiſed unto glory foreign and unknown to the nature which Thou ſhalt have aſſumed, unto a throne of everlaſting righteouſneſs." To Chriſt, as man, hath His Almighty Father given a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jeſus every knee ſhould bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue ſhould confeſs that Jeſus Chriſt is Lord. He hath ſet Chriſt, as man, at His own right hand in Heaven, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come: and hath put all things, Himſelf excepted, under His feet. All power is given unto Chriſt in Heaven and in earth. And He muſt reign, His ſeparate and mediatorial kingdom muſt continue, until He ſhall have put down all rule and all authority and power,

(*f*) Hebr. i. 5. 8, 9.

until He ſhall have ſubdued all things unto Himſelf: until after having extended the dominion of His church over the whole earth, after having cruſhed with the rod of His vengeance all His adverſaries, whether rebellious men or revolted angels, He ſhall complete the glories and evince the everlaſting durability of His triumph by the perpetual deſtruction of death. That laſt enemy of man, that lateſt antagoniſt of our Redeemer, ſhall aſſuredly be deſtroyed for ever: for God hath put all things, even death himſelf, under the feet of His Son. *For in that He put all in ſubjection under Him, He left nothing that is not put under Him. For Chriſt took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the ſeed of Abraham, He alſo Himſelf took part of fleſh and blood, that through death He might deſtroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil* (*g*). Chriſt ſhall enthrone His righteous ſervants in an inheritance of everlaſting happineſs, an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away; where death cometh no more, for they ſhall die no more, but are equal unto the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the reſurrection. Then, when He ſhall thus have accompliſhed His warfare, thus effectu-

(*g*) Hebr. ii. 8. 14. 16.

ally

ally attained and eſtabliſhed for ever the purpoſes of mercy for which He took human nature upon Him; He ſhall deliver up the kingdom to His Father. He ſhall reſign His mediatorial kingdom, that ſeparate and delegated ſovereignty of the univerſe which He had held in a character now no longer neceſſary, to the Father from whom He had received it: that the eternal Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, may thenceforth be all in all.

Such are the ſublime and ſtupendous views which the word of God diſplays of the univerſal empire of the Son of God, who died for us upon the croſs. Head over all things to His church, angels and authorities and powers being made ſubject unto Him; He is indeed able to ſave to the uttermoſt all that come by Him unto God. He who is Lord of earth and Heaven vouchſafes to call His people by the endearing name of brethren. He knoweth whereof we are made; He remembereth that we are but duſt: for in every thing, except ſin, He was made like unto His brethren. We have not an high prieſt which cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities: for He was in all points tempted like as we are; and having Himſelf ſuffered, being tempted, He is able

to ſuccour them that are tempted. In the days of His fleſh He offered up prayers and ſupplications with ſtrong crying and tears unto Him that was able to ſave, and He was heard: and His ears are ever open to the prayers of His ſervants, His arm is ever ſtretched forth in defence of the heirs of ſalvation. Look up then to Chriſt, ye who, though deeply conſcious of your ſins, are humbly labouring through the ſanctification of His Spirit to ſerve Him in faith and holineſs; look up to your glorified King with confidence and joy. From His throne in the heaven of heavens He is beholding you for good. By night and by day He watches over you; ſhields you from evil, ſupports you under trials, delivers you from temptation. Fly to Him for continual protection: plead with Him for never-failing grace. Depend with unſhaken reliance on His promiſe, on His power, on His wiſdom, on His love. He who ſpared not His own life for you, ſhall He not give you all things? *All things are yours: whether the world, or life, or death, or things preſent, or things to come, all things are yours*: all things are ordained and controlled and directed for your happineſs, becauſe *ye are Chriſt's* (*b*). But tremble ye unrepenting

(*b*) 1 Cor. iii. 21. 23.

ſinner,

ſinners, ye who deſpiſe and diſobey the goſpel: tremble to behold that Saviour whom ye reject exalted to the dominion of the univerſe. By your perſeverance in tranſgreſſion you compel Him to be your enemy. You range yourſelves in battle array againſt your Judge: you turn a deaf ear to His offers of forgiveneſs: you pluck down death and miſery everlaſting with your own hands upon yourſelves. What is your confidence? Do you provoke the Almighty to anger? Are you ſtronger than He? Thoſe whom His love cannot reclaim His indignation ſhall overwhelm. Jeſus, the Lamb of God, ſacrificed for your ſins, you deſpiſe. Look to Jeſus the Son of God, Himſelf one with the Father, ſeated on His Father's throne. Behold the dawning of the great day. *Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye ſhall ſee Him!* Behold the day when *the ſun ſhall become black as ſack-cloth, and the moon as blood: when the ſtars ſhall fall from heaven, and the heaven ſhall depart as a ſcroll when it is rolled together, and every mountain and iſland ſhall be moved out of their places:* when all the enemies of Chriſt, *kings of the earth, and great men, and rich men, and chief captains, and mighty men, and every bondman and every freeman, ſhall hide themſelves in the dens and in the rocks of*

the mountains; and ſhall ſay to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that ſitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of His wrath is come: and who ſhall be able to ſtand (*i*)? Liſten even yet to the voice of mercy. Bend the ſtubborn knee, bow down the hardened heart. He ſtill waits to be gracious. But the ſeaſon of trial will have an end. His Spirit will not always ſtrive with man. Your time of trial may be expiring. Humble yourſelf before Chriſt, the Lord of heaven and earth: truſt in His atoning blood: pray without ceaſing for His grace: and ſave yourſelves, while yet you may, from *the reſurrection of damnation.*

(*i*) Rev. i. 7. vi. 12—17.

SERMON XIX.

An Expoſition of the ſecond Part of the Leſſon appointed for the Burial Service.

I COR. XV. 20.

Now is Chriſt riſen from the Dead, and become the firſt fruits of them that ſlept.

IN the preceding diſcourſe I laid before you the ſubſtance of St. Paul's arguments in the earlier part of the chapter under our conſideration; together with ſuch reflections tending to your edification and your comfort as appeared naturally to flow from the ſubject. The apoſtle had earneſtly inſiſted on the truth of the reſurrection of Chriſt as the groundwork of Chriſtian faith, and the pledge of the future reſurrection of all men at their appointed time and in their proper order. He had reminded the Corinthians of the leading feature

feature in the divine plan of redemption; that the great Deliverer who ſhould provide the means of reſtoration for fallen man ſhould himſelf be man: that the victorious enemy of the human race ſhould be deſpoiled of his ſovereignty, ſhould be caſt into everlaſting perdition, by a Being who ſhould manifeſt Himſelf in the fleſh, who ſhould be clothed in that nature, which the tempter by his triumph over our firſt parents had corrupted and enſlaved. He had enlarged on the import, the extent, and the duration, of the mediatorial kingdom of our Lord: and had marked with particular energy that complete demonſtration of the Redeemer's univerſal power, that ſource of inexpreſſible conſolation and inextinguiſhable happineſs to His ſervants, the total deſtruction of death. He proceeds unto the concluſion of the chapter ſtill to preſs theſe awakening truths on the Chriſtians to whom he addreſſed his epiſtle; and by that epiſtle, *being dead, he yet ſpeaketh* to us, and ſhall continue to ſpeak the words of ſalvation to the extremities of the earth, until his Lord ſhall return in the clouds to call the living and the dead to judgement. He confirms the doctrine of the reſurrection by additional reaſonings; and vindicates it from the cavils of objectors by perſpi-

perſpicuous and familiar illuſtrations. He enters at conſiderable length into the nature of the change, which ſhall be experienced by the glorified bodies of juſt men made perfect: ſuddenly breaks forth into a triumphant ſtrain of gratitude to God, who giveth us through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt the victory over our laſt enemy armed with the mortal dart of ſin and ſtrong in the penal ſanctions of the violated law: and cloſes the ſubject with a ſhort but impreſſive and animated exhortation to that ſtedfaſtneſs, that joyful patience in faith and holineſs, to which by the promiſe and through the blood of Chriſt, the reward of everlaſting happineſs is enſured.

Theſe, my brethren, are the leſſons which I would attempt to unfold for your encouragement in your pilgrimage through an evil world, in your paſſage through the valley of the ſhadow of death.

Elſe what ſhall they do, which are baptiſed for the dead; if the dead riſe not at all? Why are they then baptiſed for the dead? And why ſtand we in jeopardy every hour? I proteſt by your rejoicing which I have in Chriſt Jeſus our Lord, I die daily. If, after the manner of men, I have fought with beaſts at Epheſus: what advantageth it me, if the dead riſe not? Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die!

In

In the nineteenth verſe St. Paul had already affirmed concerning himſelf, and the other apoſtles and preachers of the goſpel: *If in this life only we have hope in Chriſt; we are of all men moſt miſerable.* Moſt truly might he make this declaration. What was their ſituation as you find it repreſented in the Acts of the Apoſtles, and incidentally deſcribed in the Epiſtles of St. Paul and of the other ſacred writers? One continued ſcene of toil, ſorrow, anxiety, danger, and perſecution. Chaſed from region to region, odious alike to the Jews and to the Romans, *in afflictions, in neceſſities, in diſtreſſes, in ſtripes, in impriſonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in faſtings, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderneſs, in perils in the ſea, in perils among falſe brethren; in wearineſs and painfulneſs, in hunger and thirſt, in cold and nakedneſs* (*a*), and under perpetual hazard of a violent and torturing death; if they were not juſtified in looking forward through Chriſt to a future recompence, they were indeed the moſt miſerable of mankind. If then they knowingly and willingly expoſed themſelves to uninterrupted dangers and ſufferings by preaching the reſurrection of their crucified Maſter; by preaching a goſpel depending on the truth of His re-

(*a*) 2 Cor. vi. 4, 5. xi. 26, 27.

ſurrection,

ſurrection, and announcing the future reſurrection of all men: what was the neceſſary concluſion? That they knew whom they had believed; that they knew that Jeſus Chriſt had ariſen, that all men ſhould riſe, that the goſpel was true. To this argument St. Paul now recurs. What conſideration, he enquires, except a firm conviction that there remaineth beyond the grave a hope for the righteous, could induce men to encounter a certain proſpect of wretchedneſs in the preſent life, and to be baptiſed for the dead: to be baptiſed into a religion eſtabliſhed on the doctrine of the reſurrection; or, as this difficult expreſſion is not unfrequently interpreted, to be baptiſed in the place of thoſe who are dead; to take upon themſelves the Chriſtian profeſſion which had proved before their eyes the cauſe of deſtruction to numbers, and eagerly to offer themſelves to fill up thoſe vacancies which martyrdom had occaſioned in the ranks of the ſoldiers of Chriſt? What other conſideration, he demands, could perſuade us, the apoſtles, to ſtand in jeopardy, cheerfully to expoſe our lives to extreme danger every hour? To ſtrengthen his reaſoning, St. Paul appeals to his own ſufferings, to his own perils. On another occaſion we find him applying to himſelf and his aſſociates the prophetical expreſ-

ſions of the Pſalmiſt: *For thy ſake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as ſheep for the ſlaughter* (*b*). And now he ſolemnly records his proteſtation that he was in daily hazard of death for preaching the goſpel. And he refers to a ſpecial inſtance of perſecution, well known to the Corinthians, which had overtaken him in Aſia, and is recorded in the nineteenth chapter of the book of Acts; and is again mentioned by St. Paul in his ſecond Epiſtle to the Corinthians (*c*), as a danger in which he was preſſed out of meaſure, above his ſtrength, inſomuch that he deſpaired even of life, regarded the ſentence of death as about to be executed upon him, and had no hope remaining except the ſure and never-failing confidence that God would raiſe the dead. *If*, ſaith he, *after the manner of men*, to adopt a proverbial form of expreſſion in ordinary uſe among you, *I have fought with beaſts at Epheſus:* if I have dared the ungovernable fury of a frantic multitude, outrageous and cruel as ſavage beaſts: *What advantageth it me, if the dead riſe not?* What poſſible benefit could I derive from all the labours and afflictions, which I bring upon myſelf by preaching Chriſtianity; by what poſſible inducement could I be impelled to incur them;

(*b*) Rom. viii. 36. (*c*) 2 Cor. i. 8, 9.

if

if there were no reſurrection? If there were no future life, after this ſhort ſcene of exiſtence; we, the apoſtles of Chriſt, ſhould employ our perſonal exertions, we ſhould recommend it as the only rational object of the exertions of others, to make the moſt of the preſent ſtate of being. We ſhould not exhort you to ſet your affections on things above, to be crucified unto the world, to be dead unto its pleaſures. Our language would be the language prevalent in the mouths of your unbelieving and ſenſual philoſophers. *Let us eat and drink*, we ſhould ſay; *for to-morrow we die.* Life is ſhort; life is uncertain. Seize every gratification of the paſſing hour. Loſe not preſent enjoyment in the hope of future bliſs: for beyond the tomb no futurity remains.

But *be not deceived*, the apoſtle continues: *evil communications corrupt good manners. Awake to righteouſneſs, and ſin not: for ſome have not the knowledge of God. I ſpeak this to your ſhame.* He admoniſhes the Corinthians to be upon their guard againſt the deceitful influence, the enſnaring ſociety, and the corrupting converſation of their falſe teachers, who maintained that there was no judgement nor life to come. He excites them to a vigilant ſelf-examination, to an unſhaken adherence

herence unto ſound doctrine, to an abhorrence of unſcriptural principles, and of ſin, to which unſcriptural principles neceſſarily lead. He reproves them for that want of *the knowledge of God*, that ſhameful deficiency in religious information and attainments, to which alone could be aſcribed their endurance for a moment of a doctrine ſubverſive of the very foundations of Chriſtianity. The reproof, as St. Paul well remarked to the Corinthians, was to their *ſhame*. My brethren, if we remain ignorant of any of the great doctrines of our religion; it is to our ſhame. The Scriptures and the houſe of God are open to every one of us. Whatever is requiſite to ſalvation is placed before the humble enquirer diſtinctly, and within his reach. The nature of God; the corruption of man; the office of our Redeemer; the unceaſing neceſſity of divine grace; the imperfection and the attendant ſinfulneſs of all human works; the conſequent impoſſibility of pardon and ſalvation except through faith in the atoning blood of Chriſt; the indiſpenſable obligation to ſtedfaſt holineſs and good works as the ſure fruits and only evidences of juſtifying faith; the certainty of a future judgement, of a reſurrection of life or of damnation: theſe are truths ſo plainly, ſo energetically

ſtated

ſtated in that volume which, if we ſincerely love God through Chriſt, will be our conſtant ſtudy, that, if we continue ignorant of them, we ſhall deſervedly be covered with confuſion.

The apoſtle, in the next place, expoſes the abſurdity of thoſe cavils againſt the poſſibility of the reſurrection of the body from its duſt, which by the unconverted heathen were frequently brought forward. *But ſome man will ſay; How are the dead raiſed up? And with what body do they come?* The folly of this objection St. Paul manifeſts by directing the thoughts of the perſon repreſented as urging it to a ſimilar example of the power of God diſplayed before the eyes of all men every day: an example which our Saviour had already applied to illuſtrate a parallel truth (*d*). *Thou fool! That which thou ſoweſt is not quickened, except it die.* O blind and proud ſelf-deceiver! Why ſhould it be thought a thing impoſſible with thee that God ſhould raiſe the dead? In every ſeed which thou ſoweſt a change is wrought of the ſame nature with that tranſformation which ſhall take place in the reſurrection of the human body. The corruption and decay of the original ſeed are neceſſary to the developement of the futurre plant. In *that*

(*d*) John, xii. 24.

which thou ſoweſt, in every ſeed which thou committeſt to the earth, *thou ſoweſt not that body which ſhall be, but bare grain; it may chance of wheat, or of ſome other grain. But God giveth it a body as it hath pleaſed Him; and to every ſeed its own body.* Thou ſoweſt a naked lifeleſs ſeed wholly different in outward appearance, in organization, in ſenſible qualities, from the living herb, which by experience thou knoweſt ſhall ſpring from its diſſolution. But God beſtoweth on it a new body, provided for it by Him conformably to its kind: He raiſeth it up into a beautiful plant furniſhed with powers and endowed with properties ſuited to the new and more noble ſtate of exiſtence, which He appoints it to fill. The hand which, from a buried and periſhing grain of wheat can raiſe up the blade and the ear; can call forth from the duſt into which man's mortal body is diſſolved a frame fit to partake of the inheritance of the ſaints in light. Do you require additional arguments and illuſtrations? God has abundantly ſupplied them. He has already written them in His works. He has already manifeſted Himſelf able to create bodies of fleſh ſeverally differing according to their generic diſtinctions; and bodies of other natures, varying each from the other in glory.

All

All fleſh is not the ſame fleſh: for there is one kind of fleſh of men; another fleſh of beaſts; another of fiſhes; and another of birds. There are alſo celeſtial bodies, and bodies terreſtrial. But the glory of the celeſtial is one; and the glory of the terreſtrial is another. There is one glory of the ſun; and another glory of the moon; and another glory of the ſtars: for one ſtar differeth from another ſtar in glory. He who has moulded the duſt of the earth into bodies of fleſh diverſified in their natures according to the wide diverſity which ſubſiſts between the different families of the animal world: He who has beſtowed on the inanimate workmanſhip of his hands, on the orbs which roll through unbounded ſpace, degrees of radiance ſo various as thoſe by which the earth, the moon, the ſun, and the innumerable ſtars of heaven are reſpectively diſtinguiſhed: He is able to revive under another form the decayed fleſh of man, and for ever to crown it with glory, which it was incapable of ſuſtaining before. Is not this repreſentation true? Is it not pertinent? Even *ſo alſo is the reſurrection of the dead. It is ſown in corruption; it is raiſed in incorruption: it is ſown in diſhonour; it is raiſed in glory: it is ſown in weakneſs; it is raiſed in power: it is ſown a natural body; it is raiſed a ſpiritual body.* Such

ſhall be the majeſty of the righteous, when they ſhine like the ſun in the kingdom of their Father: ſuch the glorious change experienced by their natural bodies, when they are transformed by the Lord Jeſus into bodies ſpiritual like His own. For as *there is* now *a natural body*; ſo *there is* alſo *a ſpiritual body*, in reſerve for the children of God. *And ſo it is written: The firſt man, Adam, was made a living ſoul*; when God breathed into his noſtrils the breath of life (*e*). But *the laſt Adam* not only became, like the firſt man, a living ſoul: but by His own proper power He poſſeſſed life in himſelf; and He was able alſo to beſtow life on others according to His pleaſure. He *was a quickening Spirit. For as the Father hath life in himſelf; ſo hath He given to the Son to have life in himſelf. As the Father raiſeth up the dead and quickeneth them; even ſo the Son quickeneth whom He will. And all that are in the graves ſhall hear His voice, and ſhall come forth* (*f*). As every deſcendent of Adam has by inheritance received a natural body ſimilar to that of his firſt parent; ſo ſhall every true believer in Chriſt Jeſus receive at the laſt day by the quickening power of His Redeemer a body ſpiritualiſed and glorified like to that of the human nature glorified in

(*e*) Gen. ii. 7. (*f*) John, v. 21. 26. 28, 29.

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the perſon of the Son of God. *Howbeit* for this his heavenly transfiguration he muſt wait in patient hope, until his earthly tabernacle ſhall be diſſolved. *That was not firſt which is ſpiritual, but that which is natural: and afterward, that which is ſpiritual. The firſt man is of the earth, earthy: the ſecond man is the Lord from heaven.* Adam, our firſt parent, was formed from the duſt of the ground; mortal in his nature, and even in paradiſe preſerved from decay only by the fruit of the tree of life. But the ſecond man Chriſt Jeſus was *God manifeſted in the fleſh:* the Son of God, by nature a partaker of the Godhead: but for our ſakes and for our ſalvation veiled for a ſeaſon in a human body, a body firſt to be ſubjected to death, then exalted into heaven, incorruptible and immortal. *As is the earthy, ſuch are they that are earthy; and as is the heavenly, ſuch are they alſo that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy; we ſhall alſo bear the image of the heavenly.* For his appointed ſeaſon the child of corruption muſt bear the body of corruption. Earth muſt return to earth before it can be clothed with life eternal. But if, while thou art in this tabernacle, thou art renewed in the Spirit of thy mind after the image of the Lord from heaven;

when Chriſt, who is thy Lord, ſhall appear, then ſhalt thou alſo appear with Him in glory.

Now this I ſay, brethren, that fleſh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God: neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Our bodies, if continued in the ſtate of impure and periſhable fleſh and blood, would be unfit for the habitations of the bleſſed, unqualified for the glories of eternity. *Behold! I ſhew you a myſtery.* I would explain to you through the inſpiration of the Spirit of truth the ſecrets of the world to come, which God alone can reveal. *We ſhall not all ſleep* in the grave; *but we ſhall all be changed:* all the generations of men who ſhall have been depoſited in the tomb; and every individual of that concluding generation which Chriſt, when he cometh to judgement ſhall find alive; all ſhall be changed *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the laſt trump. For the trumpet ſhall ſound, and the dead ſhall be raiſed incorruptible; and we ſhall be changed. For this corruptible muſt put on incorruption; and this mortal muſt put on immortality. So when this corruptible ſhall have put on incorruption, and this mortal ſhall have put on immortality;* when purified for ever from all pollution, diſentangled and refined from the ſeeds of weakneſs and decay, the glorified frame ſhall be re-united to the

immortal Spirit: *then ſhall be brought to paſs the ſaying that is written, Death is ſwallowed up in victory;* then ſhall be fully accompliſhed in its nobleſt import the prophetic declaration of Iſaiah: *The Lord God ſhall ſwallow up death in victory; and ſhall wipe away tears from off all faces: for the Lord hath ſpoken it* (*g*). Then ſhall the redeemed of the Lord exclaim in the triumphant language of the apoſtle; *O death! where is thy ſting? O grave! where is thy victory?* In that day ſhall they take up, and apply to themſelves, the ſong of exultation prepared for them by the prophet in the words immediately following that promiſe, which is now fulfilled in their reſurrection to everlaſting life: *Lo! this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will ſave us! This is the Lord: we have waited for Him; we will be glad and rejoice in His ſalvation!* From the contemplation of the glories of the world to come, St. Paul as it were for a moment returns to earth, that he may impreſs on our hearts a deep conviction of the ſituation with reſpect to futurity, in which every man, as an inheritor of the mortal and corrupt nature of Adam, and as a ſinner againſt God by wilful tranſgreſſion, is placed; of the ſituation in which all men would have re-

(*g*) Iſaiah, xxv. 8.

mained without hope of deliverance, had not Chriſt redeemed them by His blood. *The ſting of death is ſin: and the ſtrength of ſin is the law.* It is ſin which cauſed death: it is ſin which maketh death terrible. By ſin death entered into the world: by ſin the bed of the dying man is ſhaken with agony, with pangs of body and horrors of conſcience: by ſin the dungeons of never-ending puniſhment were founded, and their gates thrown open to the guilty and unregenerate ſoul. And the ſtrength of ſin is the law. *Sin is the tranſgreſſion of the law: and the wages of ſin is death* (*h*). The perfect holineſs of that law of God which ſin perſuades men to tranſgreſs is the very weapon from which he derives his ſtrength, his power of working deſtruction. The law of God demands perfect obedience. The penalty for every inſtance of diſobedience is eternal death. Curſed is every one who continueth not in all things, which are written in the book of the law, to do them (*i*). Sin prevails on every man to break the law: and then with triumphant malignity inflicts the penalty upon him, and plunges him into death eternal. *O wretched man that I am!* cried St. Paul, pouring forth on another occaſion the convictions of his ſoul; *Who ſhall deliver me*

(*h*) 1 John, iii. 4. Rom. vi. 23. (*i*) Gal. iii. 10.

from

from the body of this death? I thank God, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord (*k*). Here is deliverance: here is conqueſt and life and bleſſedneſs for ever and ever. *Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt!* Thanks be to God that the ſeed of the woman hath bruiſed the ſerpent's head! Chriſt hath reſcued us from the power of the grave: Chriſt hath delivered us from the wrath to come. Chriſt hath redeemed us from the curſe of the law, being made a curſe for us. Chriſt hath taſted death for all men; and hath made His ſoul an offering for ſin; a full, perfect, and ſufficient ſacrifice, oblation, and ſatisfaction for the ſins of the whole world. Chriſt hath deſtroyed the laſt enemy. Chriſt hath prepared from the creation of the world a kingdom for His ſaints, a kingdom of righteouſneſs where there ſhall be no more death, nor ſorrow, nor crying, neither ſhall there be any more pain: where they ſhall ſee their Lord face to face, and be like unto Him, and reign with Him in bliſs unchangeable for ever and ever.

Was it then to indulge curioſity, was it to gratify the mind with ſublime deſcription, that the apoſtle had thus unfolded the everlaſting triumph of the Son of God, and the everlaſting triumph of the righteous through

(*k*) Rom. vii. 24, 25.

Him?

Him? St. Paul had a nobler purpoſe; that purpoſe which was the object of his heart in all his writings, in all his labours; to promote the glory of God by guiding and animating man to holineſs and ſalvation through faith in the blood of Chriſt. Hear the concluding leſſon, the great practical exhortation, which, as the conſequence and the ſum of his inſtructions in this chapter, he addreſſed to the Corinthians and now addreſſeth to ourſelves. *Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye ſtedfaſt, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; foraſmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.* If then, my beloved brethren, whoſe eternal welfare ought to be my fervent deſire, my unceaſing prayer, my perſevering and earneſt purſuit; if theſe things be ſure, be ye ſtedfaſt, unmoveable. Shew yourſelves the true ſervants and ſoldiers of your Lord. Continue unſhaken in His faith. Hold faſt the words of ſound doctrine. *Beware leſt any man ſpoil you through philoſophy and vain deceit. Avoid profane and vain babblings; and oppoſitions of ſcience falſely ſo called* (*l*), preſumptuous diſputes raiſed on the groundwork of ſenſeleſs ſpeculation and conjecture, againſt truths which reſt on the promiſe, and are ſecured by the omnipotence of God. Continue ſted-

(*l*) Col. ii. 8. 1 Tim. vi. 20.

faſt

faſt under temptations to ſin. *Reſiſt the Devil; and he will flee from you.* Call for ſuccour to your Redeemer, whom Satan tempted in vain; your Redeemer, who has openly triumphed on the croſs over all the powers and principalities of darkneſs; your Redeemer, who has promiſed that His grace ſhall be ſufficient for you, that He will ſave to the uttermoſt all who come unto God by Him. Continue patient and undiſmayed under ſufferings. Look unto Jeſus, the Author and finiſher of your ſalvation; who for the joy that was ſet before Him endured the croſs, deſpiſing the ſhame, and is now ſet down at the right hand of the throne of God. Be ye always abounding in the work of the Lord. The work of the Lord is faith unfeigned. *This is the work of God: that ye believe on Him whom He hath ſent* (*m*). The work of the Lord is to do the will of God; to be holy, as He is holy. The work of the Lord is to ſeek firſt the kingdom of God and His righteouſneſs; to labour for the ſalvation of your own ſoul, and that of the ſouls of others. In this bleſſed work abound more and more. Strive, through the Holy Spirit, to be an example of piety. Shew yourſelf a Chriſtian in thought, in word, and in deed.

(*m*) John, vi. 29.

Win

Win others to the love of Chriſt and the care of their eternal intereſts by prudent inſtruction and exhortation, where you may be allowed to inſtruct and exhort: and at all times, and in all places, by adorning the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things, by giving unaffected proof that your heart is ſteadily governed by Chriſtian motives, and filled with Chriſtian tempers. You know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord. You know that there is a reward for the righteous: that your aſcended Lord will return to receive His ſaints unto Himſelf: that while the wicked ſhall be turned into hell, and all the people who forget God, all who do not make it their leading object faithfully to love and ſerve their God and Redeemer; the juſt ſhall be exalted to the preſence of God, where there is fulneſs of joy and pleaſure for evermore. Preſs forward then towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Chriſt Jeſus; that you may be admitted to the Reſurrection of eternal Life.

Would you feel the aweful import of that reſurrection? Realiſe things unſeen. Suppoſe yourſelf an unconverted ſinner, recently ſeparated from the body, juſt arrived on the confines of the inviſible world. Suppoſe yourſelf addreſſed by one of its glorified in-

habitants. "Behold theſe abodes of bliſs: "theſe ineffable manifeſtations of divine "power and wiſdom and love: theſe worlds "beyond worlds diverſified with countleſs "modes of exiſtence, filling infinity and eter- "nity. Behold theſe innumerable hoſts of "angels. Behold theſe thy brethren ac- "cording to the fleſh, the juſtified children "of thy father Adam, patriarchs, prophets, "and apoſtles, ſaints of every tongue and "people, and nation! Lo! There is Chriſt, "the Redeemer of all, King in thy nature of "the univerſe! Lo! There is the throne of "God! Theſe, hadſt thou accepted the offer- "ed mercy, theſe had been thy glories! To "ſearch out theſe wonders, to ſhare this bleſſ- "edneſs, thoſe had been thy employment, "that thy bliſs, for ever! This is the Re- "ſurrection of life which thou haſt loſt. "Thou ſtandeſt"—for let penal torture be for a moment ſuppoſed not to impend—"Thou "ſtandeſt on the brink of annihilation. Snatch "thy laſt glance. The blackneſs of eternal "night is about to cloſe thee in everlaſting "oblivion." What would be thy ſenſations? How truly wouldſt thou eſtimate life and all its events! With what longing regret wouldſt thou look back upon the very miſeries of mankind! With what fervency wouldſt thou implore

implore for a renewal, were it poſſible, of probation! "Return me," thou wouldſt exclaim, "to earth! Weigh me down with "ſickneſs! Fetter me in dungeons! Encom-"paſs me with ſorrow from the cradle to the "grave! I ſhrink from no evil! I decline "no ſuffering! Return me to earth, what-"ever anguiſh may await me there: that "through the riches of grace I may poſſeſs even "but a poſſibility of attaining to the humbleſt "of theſe glories; of beholding though from "the remoteſt diſtance the countenance of "my Redeemer; of contemplating from the "fartheſt corner and verge of the univerſe "the preſence and majeſty of my God!" The dream of annihilation is diſſipated. Thy exiſtence is irrevocably prolonged to eternity. What then are thy groanings, what thine agonies, when thou beholdeſt the throne of judgement, the book of condemnation, the miniſters of vengeance, the gulf of everlaſting perdition, the priſon of unregenerate men and apoſtate ſpirits, the weeping and wailing and gnaſhing of teeth of the aſſembled enemies of God! But fear not thou who art ſtedfaſt and immovable, abounding in the work of thy Lord. Chriſt is riſen from the dead, and become the firſt fruits of them that ſlept. In thine appointed hour thou ſhalt

riſe

riſe alſo. He died to atone for thee: He aroſe to juſtify thee: He aſcended into Heaven to prepare a place for thee: He ſat down on the throne of majeſty on high to be Head over all things for thy ſalvation. Look up to Him and perſevere. Thy labour ſhall not be in vain. Well done, good and faithful ſervant! Thou ſhalt enter into the joy of thy Lord!

SERMON XX.

On the Happineſs attendant on the Paths of Religion.

PROV. iii. 17.

Her Ways are Ways of Pleaſantneſs; and all her Paths are Peace.

AMONG the internal demonſtrations of the truth of Chriſtianity, the excellence of the appropriate leſſons reſpectively addreſſed in the ſacred writings to different deſcriptions of men holds a diſtinguiſhed place. To the wicked the Scripture ſpeaks the language of indignation, tempered with offers of mercy. To the penitent it promiſes forgiveneſs. The righteous it animates with triumphant hope. To the ignorant, it holds forth inſtruction; to the unwary, caution; to

to the preſumptuous, humility; to the feeble-minded, ſupport; to the wavering, perſeverance; to the diſpirited, encouragement; to the afflicted, conſolation. Who but that Power, who diſcerns every variety of the human diſpoſition, every winding of the human heart; could have been the author of a religion thus provided with a remedy for every corruption, a defence under every weakneſs? Who but that Power, whoſe love to fallen man was ſo immeaſurably great, that He gave His own Son to die for all mankind upon the croſs; to die that all who believe on Him might be redeemed from the penalty of guilt, and might attain everlaſting life: who but that Father of mercies and God of all comfort would have ſo graciouſly directed by the ſuperintendence of His Spirit the ſacred writers of the Bible, that no individual of the human race, to whom His revealed word ſhall be faithfully made known, can periſh for want of knowledge; nor can fail of diſcovering as the reward of humble and diligent enquiry the doctrine, the admonition, the reproof, the exhortation, the promiſe, or the counſel, preciſely adapted to the ſituation in which he ſtands?

The paſſage of Scripture, which we now have before us, breathes the voice of the moſt

cheering encouragement. In ſeveral of the preceding verſes Solomon had drawn a deſcription of religion under the appellation of wiſdom. Religion is the only true wiſdom: and ſin is the moſt flagrant kind of folly. *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wiſdom: and to depart from evil is underſtanding.* To the cultivation of that true wiſdom the wiſe king invites his ſon by the aſſurance that all things which can be deſired are not to be compared unto her; that ſhe is a tree of life to them that lay hold on her; that her ways are ways of pleaſantneſs, and that all her paths are peace. The invitation, and the motives on which it is grounded, belong to us, even to all men. To the paths of religion every man is called. And the ſolemn declaration, that they are ways of pleaſantneſs and peace, is at once an exhortation to the wicked, to fly to thoſe tracks in which bleſſedneſs reſides; and to the righteous, to perſevere in thoſe courſes, in which they have already found reſt to their ſouls.

I propoſe in the firſt place to evince the truth of this declaration; and afterwards to apply it for the inſtruction and improvement of thoſe, who have not yet choſen the ways of religion, and of thoſe who are walking in her paths.

I. The religious man is delivered, and delivered by religion, from thoſe cauſes of ſolicitude, terror, and affliction, which are the principal ſources of the miſeries of mankind. And he experiences helps and conſolations, to which, in proportion as men are not religious, they are ſtrangers.

Theſe important truths will appear manifeſt, if unfolded by a conſideration in detail of ſome of the anxieties and fears, which religion, and religion only, removes: and of the correſponding aſſiſtances and comforts, which religion, and religion only, beſtows.

1. The moſt grievous of all the diſtreſſes which weigh down the heart of man, is the ſenſe of unpardoned guilt. The moſt terrible of all the apprehenſions which ſhake the ſoul, is the dread of the vengeance of an offended God. From this diſtreſs, from this apprehenſion, the religious man is ſet free. He looks up to God, through Chriſt, as to a reconciled Father. *Being juſtified by faith, he has peace with God through our Lord Jeſus* (*a*). He no longer feels the intolerable recollection of former ſins depreſſing him into anguiſh and deſpair: but in the very moments when he looks back upon them with the profoundeſt

(*a*) Rom. v. 1.

ſelf-abaſement, he beholds them waſhed away by the blood of *the Lamb of God*, who was ſacrificed for the tranſgreſſions of the whole world. In that ſacrifice he has learned that he has himſelf an intereſt: in that ſacrifice he finds pardon and peace. He is no longer *alienated from God*, at enmity with the Almighty Sovereign of earth and heaven. He contemplates his Creator with filial affection; delights in his holineſs; loves his commandments. He hears as addreſſed to himſelf the voice of God ſpeaking in His revealed word: *Thy ſins and thine iniquities I remember no more. I will be to thee a Father; and thou ſhalt be to me a Son. Be thou faithful unto death; and I will give thee a crown of life* (*b*). The burthen is removed from his ſoul; and he goeth on his way rejoicing. He feels ſpringing up within his breaſt the genuine conſolations of the goſpel. He feels that *the fruit of the Spirit is joy and peace.* He is *filled with all joy and peace in believing* (*c*). Every token of grateful obedience which he is enabled to render to his Redeemer, overſpreads his heart with gladneſs. Every devout aſpiration which he directs to the throne of grace, diffuſes holy peace over his ſoul. He is a ſubject of *the*

(*b*) Hebr. viii. 12. 2 Cor. vi. 18. Rev. ii. 10.
(*c*) Gal. v. 22. Rom. xv. 13.

Prince of Peace, an heir of God through Chriſt, reconciled unto the Father by the blood of the Son. As he advances in religion, he advances in happineſs. He turns his eye backward on the days, when he was comparatively unacquainted with religion; and exclaims in the language of holy writ; *I had heard of her by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye ſeeth her* (*d*). *Her ways are ways of pleaſantneſs: and all her paths are peace.*

2. The religious man is delivered from immoderate fear of falling away from God under future temptations. He knows that even unto the bed of death his faith and his obedience will be exerciſed by temptation. He knows his own weakneſs, his own corruption. He knows that, if he holds not faſt that which he hath, another ſhall take his crown. He knows that, if he abandons his Saviour, his name ſhall be blotted out of the book of life (*e*). He knows, for his God hath pronounced the warning, that he is to *paſs the time of his ſojourning here in fear; that happy is the man that feareth always* (*f*). He fears for himſelf. But his fear is not an overwhelming terror. It is a fear which excludes

(*d*) Job, xlii. 5. (*e*) Rev. iii. 5. 11.
(*f*) 1 Pet. i. 17. Prov. xxviii. 14.

all dependence on his own ſtrength. It is a fear which produces humility, caution, vigilance, meditation, and prayer. But it is not a fear which brings anguiſh: it is not a fear which urges to deſpondence. Why? Becauſe he looks up to Him who is mighty to ſave; to Him who has promiſed to ſave all who fly to Him for ſuccour. He looks to the Lord his Sanctifier; to the covenanted aſſiſtance of the Spirit of God. That he may obtain ſupport from above; he neglects not the exertions, which the Scripture, his unerring rule, pronounces to be neceſſary on his part. While he prays that God would not lead him into temptation; he abſtains from needleſsly plunging himſelf into ſcenes of trial. While he ſolicits from the bounty of God the *true riches*; he neglects not the *talent* with which he is entruſted. He is circumſpect, watchful, ſober-minded. He conſiders his ways, that he may turn aſide his foot from evil. He is zealous to employ to the uttermoſt the ſtrength which he has received in promoting the glory of the Giver. Hence he applies with devout confidence to Him, who has engaged to beſtow His Holy Spirit on all that aſk Him. He lifts up his heart to God in the inſpired language of the Pſalmiſt: *Lord! I am thy ſervant: forſake*

not

not the work of thine own hand. Leave me not, neither forſake me, O God of my ſalvation! Caſt me not away from Thy preſence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Reſtore unto me the joy of Thy ſalvation: and uphold me with Thy free Spirit (*g*). In the words of inſpiration he reads the anſwer of his God. *My grace is ſufficient for thee. I am with thee always. I will never leave thee, nor forſake thee. Becauſe thou feareſt me, I have hearkened and heard it: and thou ſhalt be mine; and I will ſpare thee as a man ſpareth his own ſon that ſerveth him. Thou therefore, My ſon, be ſtrong in the grace that is in Chriſt Jeſus* (*h*).

3. The religious man is delivered from corroding anxieties as to the events which may befal him during the reſidue of his life. He has ſet his affections on things above, not on things on the earth. His treaſure is in heaven: and there alſo is his heart. Having food and raiment, he is therewith content. On earth he is but a ſojourner and a pilgrim: and he perceives that it needs not to be an object of ſerious concern whether the road along which he travels be ſomewhat more or leſs ſmooth, whether he meets with ſomewhat more or fewer accommodations on his

(*g*) Pſalm xxvii. 9. li. 11, 12. cxxxviii. 8.
(*h*) 2 Cor. xii. 9. Matth. xxviii. 20. Hebr. xiii. 5. Mal. iii. 16, 17. 2 Tim. ii. 1.

journey. He ſhall ſoon reach the end, his everlaſting home, his everlaſting reſt. To that home, to that reſt, he ſteadily looks forward: and repines not at the difficulties of the way. And why ſhould he repine? What if he be overtaken by calamity? What if he be laid on the bed of ſickneſs? Cannot Omnipotence remove calamity? Cannot Omnipotence reſtore health? *The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to ſhew himſelf ſtrong in behalf of them, whoſe heart is perfect towards Him* (*i*). But what if his affliction be continued? Knoweth he not that all things ſhall work together for good in the end to them who love God? He feels that he can humbly ſay with Peter; *Lord! Thou knoweſt all things: Thou knoweſt that I love Thee.* He feels that he loves God, and is comforted. But what if he ſhould experience the ſevereſt, the leaſt retrievable, of worldly deprivations; the loſs of dear and pious friends? Has God provided no balm for that wound? Cannot God provide for him other friends, who may fill in ſome meaſure, if not entirely, the void in his heart which death has made? And the pious friends whom he has loſt, has he loſt them for ever? He has loſt them but for a moment. They are but gone a little before him.

(*i*) 2 Chron. xvi. 9.

They

They are waiting to welcome his arrival in the kingdom of their Redeemer, where they ſhall meet in bliſs unſpeakable, never to part again. In the moſt trying hour, under diſpenſations the moſt afflictive, he remembers, and he experiences, the conſoling influence of the Spirit of God. He finds Him to be, what He was announced to be, the true *Comforter*. From that Spirit he receives unfailing ſupplies of ſupporting and ſtrengthening grace. The fruits of that Spirit he ſtill finds to be *joy and peace*. He hears the words of his Saviour; *Let not your heart be troubled:* and repoſes with unclouded ſerenity on His love. His patient endurance becomes thankful acquieſcence: and his holy calmneſs is at times exalted to joy *unſpeakable, and full of glory.*

4. The religious man is delivered from the fear of the laſt enemy, Death. *Through fear of Death* ungodly men *are all their lifetime ſubject to bondage* (*j*). From this thraldom, thraldom which renders life itſelf a burthen, the ſervant of God has been reſcued. His fetters are broken. Before him Death ſtands diſarmed of his terrors. What though the approach of Death excites tender ſolicitude for thoſe whom the dying man leaves behind? He knows that the Power, who has protected

(*j*) Heb. ii. 15.

him,

him, is able alſo to protect them. He liſtens to the promiſe of his Lord: *Leave thy fatherleſs children; I will preſerve them alive: and let thy widow truſt in Me* (*k*). He liſtens; and anxiety is at an end. What though the approach of Death be accompanied with temporary alarms at the proſpect of ſtanding before his Maker? The heart of the Chriſtian is ſoon re-eſtabliſhed. He remembers that he is to ſtand before his Maker, not in his own righteouſneſs, but arrayed in the imputed righteouſneſs of his Redeemer. He knows that he ſhall be *complete in Chriſt*; that he ſhall thus be *without fault before the throne of God* (*l*). Sin, the ſting of Death, is taken away. The gloom which overhangs the valley of the ſhadow of Death becomes the twilight of an eternal morning. The grave is the gate of heaven. The moment which extinguiſhes mortal exiſtence is the commencement of everlaſting life. He longs to bid adieu to pain and ſorrow: he longs to be united to the glorified ſpirits of the juſt whom he loved on earth, to join the innumerable company of ſaints and angels; to behold his Redeemer face to face; to be bleſſed in the preſence of his God. It is thus that the righteous fall aſleep!

(*k*) Jer. xlix. 11. (*l*) Col. ii. 10. Rev. xiv. 5.

5. There

5. There yet remain various circumſtances, which attend the religious man in the ordinary courſe of his life, and contribute no ſmall acceſſions to the daily amount of his happineſs. By the integrity and the kindneſs of his conduct, for integrity and kindneſs are among the genuine fruits of true religion; he is on many occaſions placed beyond the reach of thoſe who may be deſirous of injuring him. *Who is he that will harm you;* who is he that under common events will be able to bring you into trouble; *if ye be followers of that which is good?* In domeſtic life has not the religious man, and he alone, grounds for expecting permanent harmony and affection? Will not his friends, ſelected from among thoſe who love their God, be found tender and faithful? Will not his intercourſe with them be equally a ſource of improvement and of delight? Will not the general temper of his mind be cheerful ſerenity? Free from the dominion of ambition, of avarice, of anger, and of other diſorderly paſſions, he deſcends quietly and contentedly along the ſtream of life; little moleſted by many of the uſual cauſes of uneaſineſs, and at a diſtance from many of the ordinary occaſions of danger. From the common bounties of Providence he derives higher ſatisfaction

tion than other men. And he has continual experience of bleſſings, which the wicked neither reliſh nor perceive. The interchange of day and night, the viciſſitudes of revolving ſeaſons, return to him with renovated joy. They preſent to his view the Author of all things, the Supreme Object of his gratitude and love. The contemplation of the works of God, meditation on the wonders of redemption, recollection of paſt mercies, devout anticipations of future glory: theſe are ſubjects which occupy and expand his heart, and cauſe it to overflow with that peace of God, which paſſeth human underſtanding. *Great peace have they who love Thy law, O Lord. Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whoſe mind is ſtayed on Thee; becauſe he truſteth in Thee. Godlineſs has the promiſe of the life which now is, as well as of that which is to come* (*m*). *The ways of religion are ways of pleaſantneſs; and all her paths are peace.*

II. I proceed to apply the inſtruction, which may be drawn from the text, to perſons of three different deſcriptions.

1. I would firſt addreſs thoſe who are decidedly wicked.

(*m*) Pſalm cxix. 165. Iſaiah, xxvi. 3. 1 Tim. iv. 8.

If

If the ways of religion are ways of pleaſantneſs and peace; the oppoſite paths of ungodlineſs muſt be paths of miſery. What ſaith the Scripture? *The wicked are like the troubled ſea, when it cannot reſt; whoſe waters caſt up mire and dirt. There is no peace, ſaith my God, to the wicked* (*n*). Do you doubt the truth of this declaration of the Omniſcient? Conſider the unrighteous. Do ſuch men appear to you to be happy? Are the tempers of their minds, are their views, their plans, their ſecret reflections, ſuch as are likely to give birth to inward tranquillity and comfort? If they ſeem to enjoy peace, is it not the tranquillity of folly, the ſecurity of ignorance, the ſtupor of unconcern, the deadneſs of a conſcience paſt feeling, the judicial infatuation of a reprobate mind? Is it not the peace of a mariner who knows not that a plank has ſtarted in the bottom of his veſſel? Is it not the peace of a traveller who thinks not that the bridge on which he croſſes the gulf is about to ſink from beneath his feet? Is it not the peace of a criminal, who foreſees not that the hand of juſtice waits but for the cloſe of day to arreſt him in his bed, to hurry him to trial and execution? Is the conduct of the wicked ſuch as is adapted to

(*n*) Iſaiah, lvii. 20, 21.

produce

produce happineſs to themſelves? Does their wickedneſs render their families happy? Does it recommend them to you as confidential aſſociates, as deſirable friends? If you wiſh for additional information, appeal to the wicked man himſelf. But appeal to him at a moment, when he will ſpeak the truth. Appeal to him on his death-bed. Stand thou on the one hand, while his conſcience beholds the king of terrors on the other. Enquire of him, whether his life has been a happy life. Enquire whether from his own experience he would counſel thee to chooſe the path of guilt as the road to peace. Examine and judge, whether he can have been a happy man. Aſk thyſelf whether the poſſeſſion of the whole world would bribe thee to take to thyſelf his paſt life with all its pleaſures coupled with his preſent ſituation and all its horrors. Whoever thou art who haſt hitherto walked in the ways of ſin and miſery; hear that voice, which ſtill invites thee to repentance, pardon, holineſs, and happineſs. Hear the voice of thy Saviour, who ſtill waiteth to be gracious. *Acquaint thyſelf with Him, and be at peace* (*o*).

2. In the next place let me requeſt the attention of thoſe perſons, who are wavering

(*o*) Job, xxii. 21.

between

between the paths of religion and the paths of guilt.

What is the reſult of your experience? Do you find peace in your preſent courſes? That is impoſſible. You are travelling by turns two contrary roads. In both of them you cannot be happy. If you find peace in one of them; you muſt neceſſarily find diſquiet in the other. What is the fact? You find peace in neither. You have rather too ſtrong a ſenſe of religion to be comfortable in the practice of iniquity. And you have by far too weak a ſenſe of religion, to enjoy the comforts which belong to the righteous. You are too much afraid of God to be able to provoke Him without anxiety. And you love Him too little to enjoy unmixed delight in obeying Him. *How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him* (*p*). If you would find peace; it is evident that you muſt relinquiſh one of thoſe paths, between which you have hitherto been heſitating. You muſt chooſe, and abide by, the one, or the other. What is your choice? In which of the two paths have you hitherto found the neareſt approach to peace of mind?

(*p*) 1 Kings, xviii. 21.

To

To judge by paſt tranſactions, do your conclude that you ſhall attain the fairer proſpect of happineſs by forſaking ſin, and devoting yourſelf wholly to God; or by renouncing religion, and abandoning yourſelf altogether unto wickedneſs? If you would act conſiſtently, if you would purſue peace with any reaſonable chance of ſucceſs; you muſt adopt one of thoſe methods. Determine therefore whether you deem it more deſirable to have God for your friend, or for your enemy: to apply to yourſelf the promiſes, or the threatenings, of His word: to behold in Chriſt Jeſus the Saviour of the penitent, or the avenger of unrighteouſneſs: to enjoy, or to reject, the conſoling influence of the Spirit of grace: to look forward to the day of judgement with triumphant hope, or with deſpairing terror. Through the long-ſuffering of your merciful Father the choice is yet in your power. Chooſe the ſervice of God in Chriſt with an humble and a ſtedfaſt heart; and *the God of peace* ſhall *ſanctify you wholly*. You ſhall be *filled with all joy and peace in believing*. You ſhall confeſs that *to be ſpiritually-minded is life and peace* (q).

(q) 1 Theſſ. v. 23. Rom. xv. 13. viii. 6.

3. Let

3. Let me now ſpeak to thoſe, who are truly religious.

Perhaps you have been ready to exclaim, that you have been, more or leſs, diſappointed in your expectations: that you have not found in the courſe of your endeavours after faith and holineſs the uniform and full ſatisfaction, for which the declarations of the Scriptures had encouraged you to hope: and that, ſince the promiſes of God can never fail, you are in conſequence depreſſed with alarming apprehenſions that you have been deceiving your own hearts, and are not in the number of the righteous. Now God forbid that his miniſters ſhould affirm, that all perſons who have not experienced in religion the complete conſolation, which it holds forth to his ſervants, are therefore not religious. The promiſes of God never fail. But there may exiſt ſome circumſtance, which has hitherto prevented you, which may even now prevent you, from reaping due benefit from them. Sometimes bodily maladies prey upon the ſpirits; and create a melancholy, which is a diſeaſe. In this ſituation, and poſſibly it may have been, or may now be, the ſituation of ſome whom I addreſs, the accompliſhment of the promiſes of God is ſuſpended: for wiſe purpoſes known unto Himſelf comfort

and peace are at preſent withheld. But to thoſe who perſevere in devout and patient obedience they ſhall aſſuredly be extended at laſt. Sometimes alſo, perſons, who are earneſt in their deſires and efforts to be religious, adopt erroneous opinions on ſome branches of religion. Perhaps, unable in common with the reſt of mankind, metaphyſically to delineate the *mode*, in which the fore-knowledge of God may be conſiſtent with the contingent ſalvation of man, they virtually pronounce them irreconcilable: and having thus adventured to limit the power of Omnipotence, they conceive that their lot has been abſolutely and irrevocably pre-ordained from everlaſting; that by the ſovereign and unconditional decree of the Almighty they have been created purpoſely to be placed, according to his fiat, in the realms of eternal bliſs, or to be conſigned to never-ending woe; and that until death ſhall remove the veil which conceals their appointed manſion, it muſt ever remain a doubt, a doubt loaded with torture and diſmay, whether to them heaven be not inacceſſible, and hell inevitable. Perhaps they no leſs erroneouſly conclude that the attainment of juſtifying faith, and the converſion of the heart by the regenerating operation of the Holy Spirit, are diſtinctly manifeſted

to the believer by inward and ſupernatural impreſſions: and not having experienced in their own boſoms the ſenſible tokens of acceptance, they infer that they are unredeemed from the penal conſequences of guilt, unſanctified by the purifying influence of divine grace, aliens from God, children of damnation. Sometimes men of piety reſtrict themſelves to partial views of religion. Perhaps they nearly confine their meditation to their own guilt; without ſufficiently raiſing their thoughts to the atonement and the interceſſion of Chriſt. Perhaps they dwell almoſt excluſively on their own weakneſs and corruption: and thus think too little of the ſanctifying, the univerſal, and the all-ſubduing aid of the Holy Ghoſt. Perhaps they fix their minds ſo intently on doctrines, as to pay too little regard to the regulation of their hearts: or, while they are anxious in the performance of good works, are too little careful to render them as fruits of faith. Now ſo far as you miſapprehend the nature of religion, you will neceſſarily fall ſhort of its genuine comforts. But it is well if that failure of complete conſolation in the ways of religion, of which you complain, be not owing to another and a more general cauſe. It is well if it be not owing to this circumſtance, that

you are not *entirely* religious. You can poſſeſs the comforts of religion only *in proportion* as you are religious. If evil inclinations ſtill reſume at intervals their original dominion over your heart: if the remains of unſubdued paſſions agitate your breaſt: they will entail their natural conſequences, ſolicitude and anguiſh. Charge not then your want of inward peace on religion: charge it on your own deficiency in religion. In proportion as you are ſinful you muſt expect the wages of ſin. Be *thoroughly* religious; and you ſhall have *perfect* peace.

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, ſaith your God (*r*). Shall not thoſe in every congregation, who are indeed the people of God, be exhorted humbly to take unto themſelves, while they continue ſtedfaſt in faith and holineſs, the conſolations which their God has provided for them? *Fear not ye*, who have ſet your hearts on ſalvation through Chriſt. *Fear not ye: for ye ſeek Jeſus which was crucified.* Fear not ye: for your Redeemer liveth. Fear not ye: for ye have an Almighty Protector. Fear not ye: for He hath promiſed to ſtrengthen you with might adequate to your trials. Fear not ye: for ye

(*r*) Iſaiah, xl. 1.

are

are under the guidance of infinite wiſdom, goodneſs, and love. Fight the good fight of faith. You ſhall have ſerenity during the conflict, and victory at the cloſe. *Caſt all your care on Him, who careth for you.* Rejoice in the word of God; *comfort yourſelves in the word of the Lord.* Verily ye ſhall know, that *the work of righteouſneſs ſhall be peace; and the effect of righteouſneſs, quietneſs and aſſurance for ever* (*s*).

(*s*) Iſaiah, xxxii. 17.

THE END.

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